No. 685.) For Week Ending February 15th, 1902. (One Penny.

SHORT STORIES

Chickering] [Boston.

"Oh, dear! I couldn't get last week's
SHORT STORIES.
(Look out for my face next week.)

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IS CHEAP, GOOD, EFFECTIVE. The Best Soap for all purposes. It Saves Time, Labour, Money. Has the Largest Sale of 1-lb. Tablets in the World.

BIG PRIZE SCHEME

For OCTOBER, 1902.

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LIST OF PRIZES:

1 Cash Prize, £100 ...	£100 0
1 Cash Prize, £75	75 0
1 Cash Prize, £50	50 0
1 Cash Prize, £45	45 0
5 Pianos (Walnut Cases), £40 each	200 0
10 Gents' Bicycles (free wheels), £17 17s. each ...	178 10
10 Ladies' Bicycles (free wheels), £17 17s. each ...	178 10
10 Cash Prizes, £10 each ...	100 0
20 Jones's Sewing Machines, £8 each	160 0
20 Cases Cutlery, £8 each ...	160 0
20 Cash Prizes, £5 each ...	100 0
100 Dinner Services (56 pieces), £2 10s. each...	250 0
100 Gold Filled Gents' Watches, £2 10s. each ...	250 0
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100 Cash Prizes, £2 each ...	200 0
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1000 Ladies' Umbrellas, 15/- ea.	750 0
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400 ½-doz. Best Electro-plated Forks, large, 15s. per ½-doz.	300 0
1000 Handsome Meat Carvers, with Steel in Case, 15s. set	750 0
1000 Ladies' Rolled Gold Bracelets, 15s. each	£750 0
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1000 White Linen Table Cloths, 12 6 each	625 0
500 Cash Prizes, 10s. each ...	250 0
1000 ½-doz. Table Knives, large, 8s. per ½-doz.	450 0
1000 ½-doz. Table Knives, small, 8s. per ½-doz.	400 0
1000 Ladies' Leather Purses, 8s. each	400 0
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1000 Ladies' Serge Dress Lengths, 7s. 6d. each ...	375 0
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4000 Ladies' Chatelaine Bags, 5s. each	1000 0
200 Children's Tea Sets, 3s. 6d. each	35 0
6000 ½-doz. Ladies' Fine Linen Cambric Handkerchiefs, 2s. 6d. ½-doz.	750 0
4000 Brushes and Combs, in cases, 2s. each	400 0
4000 Oval Hand Mirrors, 2s. each	400 0
4000 Photo Frames, 2s. each ...	400 0
38,199	**£15,362 0**

CONDITIONS OF COMPETITION.

The Tablets of **Watson's Matchless Cleanser** and of **Nubolic Soap** are enclosed in distinctive wrappers. The prizes will be awarded in the above order to persons who send the highest numbers of wrappers of either soap or both of them combined to **Joseph Watson & Sons Limited, Whitehall Soap Works, Leeds,** not later than October 31st, 1902. Each wrapper must be complete, and each package of wrappers sent will be taken as one lot. Separate entries must be sent under separate covers. Full postage or carriage must be paid. Each parcel must contain the full name and address of the sender, and the number of wrappers sent in must be marked on the same paper. On outside of parcel write lecibly "**Prize Competition.**" A list, giving result of the Competition, will be sent with each prize when it is sent out. Every wrapper must have first contained soap. No employes of Joseph Watson & Sons Limited will be eligible. Should any dispute arise as to the contents of any parcel, or any other matter connected with this competition, the decision of Joseph Watson & Sons Limited, Leeds, to be final. All prizes will be despatched on or before December 20th, 1902.

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Sold by all Druggists and Patent Medicine Dealers everywhere.

SHORT STORIES.

No. 685.] For the Week Ending February 15th, 1902. [ONE PENNY.

New Series. **Start To-day.**

EDWARD FARRELL CHEMIST

By Philip Moon.

I.—THE WALLINGTON SUCCESSION.

EDWARD FARRELL drew his chair a little nearer to the bench upon which stood the beaker, the boiling contents of which he was watching.

His laboratory was a fairly large one, and was equipped in the most complete manner.

The shelves were crowded with chemicals and unguents, and on every hand were to be seen the most up-to-date apparatus and instruments.

It was a laboratory that must have filled less favoured scientists with envy, and Edward Farrell was its king—and he, the king, loved and worshipped his little kingdom.

One might almost say of Farrell that he was a chemist first, and a man after—almost, but not quite.

Now Farrell was not old or grey, neither had he the scholarly stoop one is so apt to associate with wide learning.

Yet his was a name known and honoured among scientists—a name that carried its own patent of nobility to those who were most advanced in the intellectual life of the century.

He was to the casual observer just a good average specimen of our best British manhood—well-built, muscular, and pleasant.

To those, however, who cared to observe him more closely, the steady blue eyes, the fine mouth, and the fine development of forehead told of a man of keen insight, of noble purpose, and of indomitable will.

He was about thirty years of age, and from his childhood had always been passionately fond of science. He had studied under Bunsen and Haffman in Germany, and when two years previously he had become heir to a fine fortune, he had established his present laboratory in the West-end of London. Nothing that money could buy was wanting, and with this splendid equipment at his disposal, he conducted his researches and took a keen interest in any outside practice that seemed likely to yield him interest or experience.

Farrell rose and gave the contents of the beaker he was watching a swirl, held it to the light and examined it critically, and then, with a sigh of comfortable satisfaction, as he listened to the storm without, sank back into his chair.

It was indeed a wild night. The wind howled and raged among the chimneys as though it were paying off some old and cherished score, while the rain pattered in strong gusts against the windows, and made Farrell thankful that he was well out of its reach.

"At any rate," he said, "I shall get a little quiet work this evening, for no one will bother me such a wretched night as this."

Almost as soon as the unconsciously spoken words had left his lips, however, a jingle of a hansom was heard in the street below, and a minute later, Mrs. Cook, his housekeeper, knocked at the laboratory door, and announced "Mr. Varley," a tall, good-looking young fellow of about twenty-five, who followed her closely up the stairs.

"Well, Farrell, old fellow! I am glad to find you in," the newcomer said, in a tone of unmistakable relief. "Can you spare me half-an-hour or so now, and—well, after that we'll see."

Farrell glanced reluctantly at his beaker.

"It's rather hard lines," he laughingly said, "just as I had been congratulating myself on the fine evening's work I was going to do. However," as he saw the anxious look on the other's face, "I suppose I must

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humour you. There you are! Out goes the gas, and now let us adjourn to the 'den' and have a smoke."

"Well!" said Farrell, when they were comfortably seated in the cosy sitting-room he called his "den," "Now let's listen to your tale of woe."

Fred Varley sat thinking for a minute, then he said: "Of course you have heard of the Wallington succession?"

"Yes. A most lamentable affair," answered Farrell; "and by-the-way, they were close relatives of yours, how stupid of me to forget—that is why you are looking so worried. My dear fellow, I am awfully sorry for you!"

"Well, Farrell, to tell you the truth, it is about this unhappy business I have come to speak to you. Two months ago my uncle, Sir Edward Wallington, was as hale and hearty as either you or I at the present moment.

"Full of vigour, taking a keen interest in all around him, possessed of a splendid estate, and an unimpaired fortune, one could safely have predicted that he had the best of his life before him.

"Yet within three weeks comes a startlingly rapid, and quite unaccountable breakdown in his health, and he suddenly dies—as the doctors all agree—of heart disease.

"It seems so unaccountable, because, to my certain knowledge, he had never in his life before had the slightest indication of any heart trouble.

"This, however, would not in itself have seemed so strange but for what followed.

"My cousin, Captain Wallington, my uncle's next of kin, went down to Wallington Hall to settle my uncle's affairs and take possession of his heritage; and now he, too, is dead, and the same strange breakdown and failure of the heart that carried off my uncle have been the cause of his death.

"I am next in the succession, and now heir to the estate. I suppose I ought to consider myself a fortunate man, yet I can assure you, Farrell, when I received the letter from the solicitors asking me to go down and take possession, it was like receiving my death warrant.

"I am not a superstitious man, and yet I would give much to find a decent excuse to keep away.

"It may be very silly, and probably is nothing but fancy; yet there the fact remains. However, I don't intend to shirk my duty, much as I should like to do so.

"I intend to face the music; and the long and the short of the whole matter is—I want you to go with me!

"You know, Farrell," young Varley continued appealingly, "you used to be my 'guardian angel in trousers' at school, and you surely cannot find it in your heart to refuse me now—even if you would?"

Farrell had been looking thoughtfully into the fire during the whole of Varley's recital, and now appeared to rouse himself with an effort from the train of thought into which he had fallen.

"Tell me, Varley—did you see your uncle and cousin after they were dead?" he said, apparently ignoring Varley's last appeal.

"Yes."

"Well, did you notice anything at all striking about them. I mean beyond what you would expect to see in a dead body?"

"No, I can't say that I did. You see I have seen so few dead bodies that I can hardly judge. Their eyes looked rather prominent, I thought, and rather dark—although not very noticeably so—and even that may be my fancy, for I did not look closely at them—or at anything else, for the matter of that," and Varley shuddered.

"Did they both die at Wallington Hall?"

"Yes. In the same room, I think."

"Ha! Who succeeds you if you die without issue?"

"The estate reverts to a distant branch of the family represented now by my cousin—Dr. Elyss."

"Did he attend your uncle or cousin professionally?"

"No. He was only called in to consult when death seemed inevitable. He lives at Banford, a few miles from Wallington, and troubles very little about a 'practice,' for he has a very decent fortune I believe. In fact, he spends as much of his time at the Hall as anywhere. But, hang it all, old fellow, why all this cross-questioning—you haven't answered me yet. Say you'll come, and then you'll see things for yourself."

"Just a little patience and one more question, my impetuous young man, and then I have done. Has your cousin, Dr. Elyss, ever been in India?"

"Yes. He took a fancy to go to Bombay to study the plague, and then wandered up country for some time before returning home; but will you come, Farrell? For goodness' sake don't sit there calmly asking questions, when I am just burning with impatience. Now *will* you come?"

Surely there was a tone of suppressed excitement in Farrell's voice as he answered his friend. Yet Farrell was not easily moved.

"Yes, Varley, I'll come, with all my heart; only don't mention your suspicions to anyone—all depends on that."

"Then you think there has been foul play, Farrell?" cried Varley excitedly. "Tell me! What do you think it was—whom do you suspect?"

"All in good time," replied Farrell quietly. "I can say nothing yet, for I know nothing. Now just listen to me, and when I have had my say, I should be greatly obliged if you would 'clear out' and leave me to my thoughts. All right — no thanks — but just listen. You may expect me at Wallington three days after you arrive—that will be Thursday. Meet me at the station yourself, and only speak of me as a casual friend.

"Remember, don't mention your suspicions to

Farrell entered, carrying a bulls-eye lantern in one hand.

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anyone—more depends on that than anything; have my room next to yours if you can, and in the meantime keep you eyes open and your mouth shut. And now, my dear fellow—good-bye!"

As the jingle of Varley's cab was lost in the driving storm without, Farrell took an old ragged book tenderly from his bookcase. Then he sat quietly reading and musing before the fire, but there was a terribly grim look upon his face.

* * * * *

"Thank Heaven, you've come, Farrell!" said Varley, as they climbed up into the trap and went bowling along towards Wallington Hall.

It was Thursday. Varley looked white and shaken; and when Farrell saw him, his lips tightened and the stern look in his eyes deepened.

Varley broke the silence again.

"The place is bewitched, Farrell, I tell you. Last night I woke as from a nightmare, gasping for breath, with beads of perspiration on my brow, and a horrible frightened feeling all over me.

"There was no one in the room, I'll swear, for I had carefully locked the door, and yet there was that awful uncanny feeling all around. I was like a ghost when I looked into the glass this morning, and I've been on the shake ever since.

"Every one tells me how queer I look; and Elyss even laughingly threatens to send round old Doctor Jones to see me.

"It's terrible, Farrell. I feel just an arrant coward. The place is bewitched, or haunted, or something!" and the poor fellow looked up piteously at the scientist seated beside him.

Farrell was moved, but he only said:

"Have you arranged the bedrooms as I asked, Varley?"

"Yes," answered he, "yours is opposite mine, and our two are the only ones occupied on that floor just now. The servants are in another wing; young Stanley, who is staying with us, and Doctor Elyss are sleeping under us, so that we are quite alone. I wish that you would turn in with me to-night, though, Farrell. I am as nervous as a kitten?"

He tried to carry off his request with a laugh, but failed miserably.

"I fully intend to be with you, Varley," answered Farrell, "*only* no one must know it. Leave your door unlocked, and half-an-hour afterwards I will join you. Don't undress, but lie down as you are and wait for me.

"Then I think—— What! is that the Hall? What a fine place—and that is young Stanley and Doctor Elyss, is it? Well, you can climb down and introduce me. How do you do, Doctor Elyss? Pleased to meet you. What do you say, Varley? I shall be late for dinner if I stand chattering here? What an unpardonable offence! Excuse me, gentlemen, I must run off and dress, or else I shall incur your everlasting displeasure."

What a change had come over him! Could this laughing, breezy, jovial society man be the same grim-looking, serious Edward Farrell of two minutes before!

Yet, throughout the evening it was the same. He was the life and soul of the party; and when they retired for the night young Stanley mentally decided that "he was a jolly decent fellow, don't you know!" Even Elyss remarked to Varley that Farrell wasn't half a bad sort, only 'there was a good deal of ffoth' about him."

Varley himself was filled with astonishment, and as he closed his room door, he wondered how much help he was to expect from such a light-hearted and frivolous individual as Farrell. Yet he carried out Farrell's instructions to the letter, and after what seemed a dozen hours to the anxious watcher, the door of the room crept slowly open, and Farrell entered. He had a small, partially-shaded bull's-eye lantern in one hand, and what appeared to be a gladstone bag in the other.

He whispered quietly across the darkness of the room to Varley, and told him to sit still on the bed—made sure that the blinds were closely drawn, locked the door, and then commenced quietly and cautiously to unpack his bag by the dim light of the lantern.

Varley watched all his movements with speechless wonder. What could it all mean? but his first whispered inquiry was met by a stern, low "Hush!" from Farrell.

Farrell first took from the bag two cases with back straps, that looked in the flickering darkness for all the world like the wallets worn by tourists, only from the top came a small flexible tube ending in a funnel-shaped mouthpiece.

One he fastened deftly on his own back, and the other on Varley's.

"When I give you the signal," he whispered, "fasten the funnel over your mouth with this india-rubber band and draw your breath through the apparatus."

Next he took from the bag a packet of white blotting-paper strips and a bottle containing some solution.

He carefully soaked each strip in the solution and then commenced to hang them about the room.

One he pinned just above the key-hole, another on the hangings at the head of the bed, another on the curtains, four on the floor at different places, and yet another near the ceiling.

This finished, he looked at his watch, it wanted ten minutes to two; he darkened his lantern and softly crept to the bed and sat down in the darkness at Varley's side.

Varley sat still on the bed.

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Varley shuddered as the light disappeared. What were they to expect? How black and creepy the darkness seemed!

What did all this mysterious preparation mean? What were they waiting for?

He could have shrieked aloud.

The long minutes crept by and no sound save their own breathing broke the deadly stillness of the night.

Then somewhere a distant clock struck two.

Farrell turned up his lantern and crept round the room. He threw a pencil of light on every strip in turn; but whatever he expected to find, he was apparently disappointed, for he darkened his light again, and again crept noiselessly to Varley's side.

To Varley the next ten minutes seemed like so many hours. Would nothing happen? Anything rather than such intolerable suspense.

Once, from somewhere in the house, came an unmistakable "click," then all was silent once more.

Again, after a further pause, Farrell crept round to his strips.

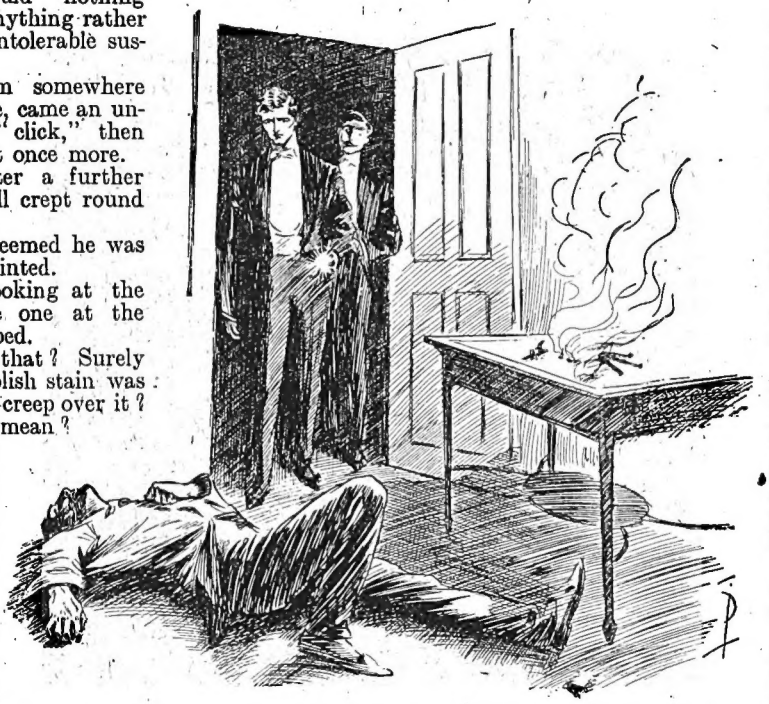
Again it seemed he was to be disappointed.

He was looking at the last one—the one at the head of the bed.

What was that? Surely a faint, purplish stain was beginning to creep over it? What can it mean?

The effect on Farrell was electric: his eyes sparkled, he looked an enthusiast.

"Quick, Varley!" he whispered, "on with your respirator!" and he himself set the example by fastening his funnel over his mouth.



On the ground at the side of the table lay the figure of a man.

Then with a penknife he quickly, but still with caution, cut down the curtain and revealed the wall behind. As the beam of light flashed over its surface—low down, near the pillow—it lit on what looked like a piece of old lead gas-piping projecting about an eighth of an inch from the wall.

Farrell put his hand before it; then seized Varley's and held it there too.

What could it mean? A slow stream of gas or vapour of some sort was issuing from it. Surely there was no gas in that old country house.

Besides, it was distinctly warm.

Varley looked questioningly to Farrell, but he had darted across the dark room to his bag.

He returned with a tiny rubber stopper in his hand, and quickly jammed it into the pipe.

His face was stern—suppressed excitement gleamed from his eyes—and as the dim reflected light of the lantern shone on him, he looked a weird and terrible figure.

He held the stopper tightly in the tube and was listening intently. How their hearts beat! How dark and silent everything seemed! What was happening? Why did Farrell look so anxious?

The seconds crept by—ten—twelve—how they dragged. Hark! What was that?

Downstairs somewhere there was a sharp "pop," like the opening of a ginger-beer bottle. Then a most unearthly shriek of agony rang out through the silent house and died away in a gasping wail.

Then a low thud; and after there was a silence which was as dead as of the grave.

Farrell seemed to have been expecting something of the sort, for he now left the pipe, rushed to the window and opened it wide.

"Downstairs after me, Varley, as fast as you can!" he said, removing the funnel from his mouth for a moment, "and be sure and use your respirator!"

Out into the corridor they rushed, and down the stairs.

Varley's heart was in his mouth, for he knew not what dread thing to expect.

Farrell was as cool and firm as if he were in his own loved laboratory, but then he *knew* and knowledge drives away fear.

From under one of the doors on the next landing a lurid light showed.

Farrell tried the door. It was locked. He seemed to expect as much, and stepping back a pace or two, he crashed it open with his shoulder.

As the door swung backwards a scene was revealed that Varley will remember to his dying day.

On a writing-table at the side of the room the fragments of a broken flask were lying; a spirit lamp, burning under the tripod that had supported the flask, had set fire to its spilt contents, and these in turn had fired the table cover.

From the broken neck of the flask a tube ran to the wall and disappeared near the ceiling.

On the ground at the side of the table lay the figure of a man dressed in pyjamas; blood was streaming from his face, but it was nevertheless easily recognisable—it was the face of Doctor Elyss.

Farrell sprang to the table and smothered the flames; flung the window wide open; and then came and carefully examined the senseless man.

After a brief examination he arose, removed his respirator, and said:

"I don't think he'll cheat the gallows after all, Varley.

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You can take off your funnel now, the room is pretty well clear. You, Stanley "—for that youth had just appeared at the door with white face and quaking limbs—" you can send one of the servants for the police, and also the gardener to watch this fellow, when he comes to.

"Now what do you say to a smoke, Varley, till the inspector comes?"

* * * * *

"How do I explain it all? Easy enough! Your cousin and uncle each died very suspiciously. The symptoms were exactly those of an obscure Eastern poison, known, I suppose, to less than half-a-dozen people in Europe.

"The action of the poison it is quite impossible to detect, and the death of the victim appears quite natural to the unknowing medico.

"It is extremely volatile, and, as in your uncle's and cousin's cases, its action was spread over at least a fortnight—the only available time for its application seemed to be the night—and then only in diluted doses.

"What more easy than to project its vapour into the air of the sleeping chamber?

"Furthermore, the only country where the poison is more widely known is India.

"Hence my suspicions crystallised round Elyss. Once on the trail, it was easy to follow it up. Judicious inquiries revealed the fact that all Elyss' fortune had been lost by rash speculation, and he must have been well-night desperate.

"The rest you know. The respirators were filled with chemicals to purify our air so that we were not overcome by the poison before we could locate its inlet. The prepared test slips helped us to do that. Then when I stopped the tube the pressure accumulated in the thin flask in the murderer's room, and eventually burst in his face—overpowering and betraying him.

[Next Week: **"The Kirby Diamonds."**]

A is for Artists far-famed in all lands.
B is the Brushes they held in their hands.
C is their Colours which pass not or fade.
D is the Dainty Designs which they made.
E is the Easels their picture sustained.
F is the Fame which these artists have gained.
G is the Gold which their works might procure.
H is for Have—you may Have them, for sure—
I is for If—if only you're willing—
J is for Just—just to spend a mere shilling!
K is the Kudos the buyer will gain.
L is the Loss the non-buyer'll sustain.
M is the Money you'll save if you're wise.
N is for Nominal—such is the price.
O is the Offer—you've only to take it.
P is for Pearson's, the people who make it.
Q is for—Quickly your copy to get.
R is for—Run, or you'll lose it, you bet!
S is the Splendour of binding and print.
T is the Treasures of colour and tint.
U is for You whom to buy we enjoin.
V is the Value you get for your coin.
W's the Want which these pictures supply.
X the Unknown who are fearful to buy.
Y are they fearful? They're silly—that's why!
Z is—well, we'll leave it in order to tell you that the publication alluded to is entitled,

"FAMOUS PICTURES OF THE WORLD,'

and is being published in shilling parts by

C. ARTHUR PEARSON, LIMITED.

PART I. is now on sale everywhere and contains nine facsimile reproductions of world-famed masterpieces by Titian, Greuze, Millais, Burne-Jones, Leader, and other well-known artists.

Couldn't Take it Back.

Proprietor: "What are you taking back there?" Waiter: "Customer sent this beefsteak back. Says he couldn't cut it." Proprietor (examining it): "Take it back to him and tell him he'll have to pay for it. We can never use it again; he has bent it out of shape."

That Altered It.

Doctor: "Yes; the symptoms are very serious. You must go to bed at once, and I will call and see you twice a day." Patient: "In that case it's lucky I joined the club last week." Doctor: "A club case! Good gracious! Why didn't you say so? Take a pennyworth of Epsom salts; you'll be all right to-morrow."

A New Metal-Polish.

The other day a lady discovered her servant girl trying to clean the fender with a copy of *Short Stories*. "Bridget!" exclaimed the astonished lady, "whatever are you doing with my paper? You know I only bought it this morning." "Oh!" replied Bridget, "you said that it always brightened you up, and so I am trying it on the fender."

He Didn't Pay.

An old Scotsman, not feeling well, called upon a doctor. The doctor gave him some verbal instructions as to how to regulate his diet, advising him, among other things, to drink no spirits for a time. The Scotsman rose to leave, when the doctor said: "I am in the way of charging for my advice. I will trouble you for half-a-crown." "Oh, maybe," said the patient, "but I'm no gaun to tak' yer aavice!"

An Army Contract.

Passing along Princes Street, Edinburgh, one day a herculean Scots Grey stopped at the post-office, and called on a street arab to polish his boots. The feet of the drag on were in proportion to his height, and looking at the tremendous boots before him, the arab knelt down on the pavement, and shouted out to his chum across the roadway: "Jamie, come ower an' gie's hand; I've got an army contract."

After the Opera.

Excited Auditor: "I declare, I never saw such wretchedly bad taste—such a scandalous violation of the dramatic unities—such an outrage on all sense of propriety!" Friend: "What's the matter, old man? Some of 'em been gagging again?" Excited Auditor: "Gagging isn't a circumstance to it. The opera was *William Tell*—a grand thing, you know—and just as the curtain rose on the scene displaying the hat of the tyrant Gesler on a pole, to which the hero refuses to bow, what does that wretched orchestra do but strike up 'Where did you get that hat?' Destroyed all the romantic illusion of the piece. Soulless brutes!"

The Worst Kind of Bargain.

A theatrical manager told a story against himself the other day. An actor came to him and applied for an engagement. There did not seem to be much need of him, but his demands in the way of salary were very modest, and the manager said to him: "Well, you may consider yourself engaged. I fancy I can find something for you to do." The newly-engaged man looked at the manager questioningly. "How about a contract," he asked. "Oh, never mind a contract. We'll have a verbal contract." There was a look of mild reproach in the eyes of the man as he answered sorrowfully: "Sir, the last time I made a verbal contract I drew a verbal salary."

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A Whistling Girl.

They carried him in from the surgeon's room and laid him on the narrow little bed that the nurse had made ready. Her eyes were wide, and her face was pale to the lips, but her step was steady and her manner calm as they withdrew and left her alone with him. A suppressed sob shook her frame as she lightly touched the bandages over his eyes, those honest grey eyes in which she had read nothing but loyalty and devotion. But Annie Morton was a trained nurse, and she forced down the rising tide of emotion and sat beside her patient, quietly waiting for him to regain consciousness. When he stirred, her hand was on his breast in an instant holding him steady.

"Only the nurse," she said, in a low even tone. "You are to remain perfectly quiet."

The meaning of her words came to him slowly as the effect of the anæsthetic wore off.

"Nurse," he suddenly asked, "why are my eyes bandaged?"

"They have been injured," she explained, "but we think not seriously. The only way to be sure that we shall save your sight is to keep the eyes bandaged for a time."

Her quiet manner subdued him, and he was silent, but only for a moment.

"Tell me first," he said, "have you seen my brother, Jim Curtis?"

A shudder ran through the girl. Yes, she had seen him stretched out in eternal quiet.

"All is well with him," she answered; "but you must be quiet now."

"He didn't see me until the last minute," went on the man, "and I had thought that he was a thousand miles away. We were fighting our way across the clearing when I saw a big fellow strike at a man just ahead of me. The man turned to parry the blow and I saw his face. It was Jim! I remember throwing myself between the fellow and my brother, but after that I don't remember anything."

"I know," she said. "A shell burst almost in front of your face. It was Captain Jim Curtis who led the men across that clearing. It was reckless work——"

"Yes, but that's Jim, though," said the man. "Why, he'd dare anything. How proud she'll be to hear of his courage in this affair! Nurse, couldn't he come in to see me?"

"No, not under any circumstances," was the decided answer. "You've talked too much now——"

"I'll be quiet, nurse, but won't you ask him to give me a whistle as he passes by? He has the prettiest whistle in the world. It's like a flute. Wait till you hear it!"

A swift rush of tears blinded the nurse. She was only a woman, and it meant much to her that the playmate of her childhood's days was even then being carried away to lie for ever silent in a soldier's grave.

"Ask him to whistle just once. He'll surely come to ask about me."

"I'll see about it," she answered at length, "if you think it will not excite you too much."

"Oh, nurse"—the big man's voice had grown tremulous—"I haven't heard that whistle for five years! You'd know what he is to me if you knew what I've given up for him."

The nurse caught her breath. "We'll see about it to-night when I go to make my report," she said. "Rest now, so that the report may be a good one."

The man obeyed. It was some time before he spoke again.

"I don't know why you should remind me of her," he said. "You're such a little, soft-voiced thing, and Annie is a big country girl, with a voice that makes the room ring when she laughs or sings. She does both, bless her! She can whistle, too, as well as any fellow I ever knew. Jim taught her, and I used to tease her about being a whistling girl."

A sad little smile passed over the face of the tall nurse as she bent above him to arrange the pillows.

"I must leave you now to make my report," she said. "Be very quiet, and I will not forget your message."

The man lay still, wondering how long the darkness would last. He felt lost, lying there alone, but suddenly through the stillness there came a clear high whistle, another and then a succession of bird calls. The man lay tingling with delight at the sounds.

"Jim!" he whispered. "God bless you, lad! Thank Heaven that I was with you in time!".

When the nurse came in again, she found him tranquilly smiling.

"He did whistle, nurse, the same merry old whistle. Couldn't you ask him for me how Annie is? Only that."

"I can't ask him anything," replied the girl, with forced calmness. "I shall not see him again."

The man sighed.

"Well, I won't trouble you, nurse. I'd like to know how she is, though. There isn't another woman in all the world like our whistling girl."

The nurse did not dare to speak.

"You're a stranger to me, nurse," he went on, "and yet I can't help telling you all about it. She lived near us all her life, but it wasn't till Jim came to me with his hopes that I realised what she was to me. I never told her. I could see that she and Jim were made for each other, but I couldn't stay there and tamely wait for the end. I——"

The man was trembling from head to foot, but the nurse had sunk down beside the bed and buried her face in the covers.

"I went away," he resumed, "and I haven't heard a word from them since. I hope she's happy. I'd like to ask Jim why he's here and not with her. But she has spirit and courage. She's not the one to bid him stay idle at home in these times. Nurse, was that a tear on my hand? There—I didn't make you cry, did I?"

The nurse choked back the tears and replied in her habitual half-voice:

"It was the lotion that I used for your bandages. No more talking to-night, please."

"No more, nurse; but you know now why I wished

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to hear Jim's whistle. To hear him is to know that he is safe and that no sorrow will come to Annie."

The whistle floated up to him each morning and evening at the hour that the nurse went to report.

The old airs that were familiar about his far-away home came to the patient listening in the darkened room. He grew stronger as the days went by, and the nurse watched him with dreamy happiness.

She had been away from him one morning, and when she returned she met the doctor at the door. He was talking with a friend, and as she stepped past him the words rang clearly into the quiet room.

"To replace Captain Jim Curtis, who was killed in that skirmish on the 18th."

"Who—was—what?" The patient had started up in bed, his face white with horror. The nurse sprang to him. He fell back as she reached him. He stiffened in her arms, and the blackness of despair settled down upon the heart and the hopes of the whistling girl.

The doctor's abrupt commands roused her. She was the nurse again, not the stricken woman. Together they worked to bring the patient back out of the shadow, and presently she was alone with him again.

"Nurse," he said, with a sob in his voice, "I suppose I must have been dreaming or may not be quite sane, but I'll swear I heard that whistle. It was Jim's signal, I know. But Jim is dead! Oh, Annie!"

The nurse was down on her knees beside him. Her strong, soft hands held him; her voice was steady and sweet.

"Listen, dear," she said. "Annie is—Annie is here! You couldn't know me while your eyes were bound, but, dear, you were more blind before. It was never Jim; it never could be. It was you then; it is you now. Oh, my love, you have lost much, but will you not be brave for my sake, for the sake of a day that may be?"

A light of understanding settled slowly upon his changing face. His hands closed tightly upon hers.

"Annie," he whispered, "is it a dream?"

The nurse laughed in spite of the tears that would flow.

"Oh, doubting one," she said, "how could this be a dream?" And light as an elf's caress, he felt her kiss upon his lips.

C. A. Canty.

The Happy Ending.

"And so, Mr. Mortimer, divested of all its flowery compliments, your letter means that you're not going to accept my story, does it?" observed Muriel Elliott reproachfully.

The editor of the *Empire Magazine* fidgeted uneasily in his chair.

"My dear Miss Elliott," he commenced hesitatingly, "I'm really very sorry indeed, but—er——"

"Yes, I've no doubt you are," was the answer. "Still, you're not half so sorry as I am. Ah, Mr. Mortimer!" she went on in a different voice; "after all you'd said about wanting to help me, I did count on your accepting my story. I wish you'd tell me why you're declining it, though. Don't you like it?"

"Oh, yes! I like it very much indeed," returned the other hastily, seizing, as it appeared to him, the chance of appeasing his visitor's anger.

"You like it very much indeed?" she echoed wonderingly. "Then, Mr. Mortimer, why on earth did you send it back again? Surely you are the editor of the *Empire Magazine*?"

"Now, look here, my young friend," he went on, taking up a manuscript from the pile of papers before him, "this is your story. You call it, I see, 'The Love that Lasts.' Now, that's not the very best title imaginable. Still, that scarcely matters; it's the treatment of your plot that I object to. You've worked it out in such a depressingly sad manner that it's quite useless for our pages. Readers of the *Empire* insist on having only lightness and brightness, or, at any rate, in all the stories having at least a 'happy ending.' Now, if you take the manuscript away and rewrite it so that it fulfils this necessary requirement, perhaps I might be able to use it later on."

"But the world is full of sad stories, Mr. Mortimer," protested the girl.

"Yes; and that's just why we don't want any of 'em in the pages of the *Empire Magazine*," was the answer.

At eight o'clock on the evening of the day on which she had had her interview with the editor of the *Empire Magazine*, Muriel Elliott sat down to try and give her rejected story the attraction suggested by Mr. Mortimer.

'How can Mr. Mortimer expect me to give a story like this a 'happy ending'?" she exclaimed tearfully, as she realised that her labour had been wasted.

"Whom do you blame then, Muriel?" demanded her sister, looking up inquiringly, in order to detect the cause of the outburst. "I suppose you do allow yourself the luxury of blaming some one?"

'Yes I do, May; I blame Dick Hilton, of course—and I'll blame you, too, if you take his part against me!" she added.

"Don't distress yourself about me, dear," laughed the elder girl. "I've got quite enough troubles of my own to smooth over, without worrying about yours. All the same, I believe it's far more your fault than Dick's that there's this quarrel between you."

"Really, May! how can you say that?" demanded Muriel indignantly. "If Dick—I mean Mr. Hilton—isn't to blame, what does he keep away for?"

"Well, considering you told him you never wished to

see him any more, I don't see what else you could expect the poor man to do."

"Well, he ought to have known that I didn't mean it—or, at any rate, he might have asked me again," she protested.

"Being merely a man, he hasn't been gifted by Providence with feminine perception," was the answer. "As a natural consequence, he doesn't understand that when a woman says 'no,' it's only a preliminary to saying 'yes' later on. He's a nice boy, though," she continued, "and I think you made a mistake to quarrel with him."

"It was all his fault, May. He let that horrid Barrington girl make violent love to him in public, when all the time he was engaged to me."

"My dear," returned the other quietly, "I wouldn't let that trouble me if I were you. It couldn't really have been serious, either, because Edith Barrington was also engaged herself at the time, and was actually married three days after she met Dick."

"Really, May? How do you know?" cried Muriel eagerly. "I never heard of it."

"Well, on the day that you quarrelled with poor Dick, you went away for a month, if you remember, to occupy yourself with your writing, and never saw a newspaper all the time. It didn't occur to me to mention the matter when you returned to town. Surely Dick told you of that, though? Why, I remember his telling me that he wrote to you about it. Didn't you get it?"

"Yes, but I sent his letter back, May. I'd said I wouldn't have anything more to do with him, and so I returned it unopened."

"That was scarcely brilliant of you, dear," observed her sister, "considering the result."

"I don't care!" answered the other defiantly. "I don't care a bit!"

"H'm!" reflected the other, as she watched the tell-tale tears starting to the speaker's eyes. "You may say you don't care, but you'll never make me believe it."

In the distress that her sister's unexpected revelation had occasioned her, the girl had almost entirely neglected the literary work that had hitherto absorbed so much of her time. It was quite useless, she soon realised by dint of trying, to do anything of the sort now, for, until her mind was at rest again, she felt quite unable to compose a line. Consequently, the story in which, under the title of "The Love That Lasts," she had attempted to relieve her feelings, on the discovery of her *fiancé's* supposed defection, remained unaltered. Her friend, Mr. Mortimer, had written once or twice about it, but even this incentive had failed to spur her to fresh efforts.

One afternoon, however, about three months from the date of her last interview with him, she suddenly met him in Fleet Street.

"Hullo, Miss Elliott!" he exclaimed, genially; "why have you been avoiding me in this reprehensible fashion of late? The pages of the *Empire Magazine* are simply yawning for you. Haven't you managed to find a satisfactory conclusion for 'The Love That Lasts' yet? I've been keeping a space for it for the last three months, you know."

"No, Mr. Mortimer," returned the girl wearily, "I haven't finished the story, and I'm not likely to, either. I can't find the 'happy ending,' somehow."

"Dear me!" returned the editor sympathetically, struck by the woebegone face looking up to him; "that's bad—very bad indeed! Now, look here, my young friend," he added briskly, as a sudden thought struck him, "never mind the story just now. I've something else for you to do. There's a dress rehearsal at the Lyceum at 4.30 this afternoon. I want you to go and write an article for me about it. Here's a ticket for a box. You will go? That's right. Good-bye."

He watched her drive away in a hansom to execute his commission, and then continued his journey.

"Poor little girl!" he murmured to himself as he walked along; "so she's like a good many other people in this world—can't find the 'happy ending.' What a pity she quarrelled with young Hilton, and what a much bigger pity it is—now that he's back in England—that he doesn't make it up to her! I wish I could bring them together again."

Suddenly an idea occurred to him. As it did so, he gave vent to such a peal of laughter that the passers-by turned round in surprise to see what could be amusing this middle-aged, good-humoured-looking gentleman who was walking so fast along the pavement.

"By Jove! I'll do it!" he exclaimed excitedly. "If I telephone at once it will be in time."

As Muriel Elliott sat in the corner of her box, twenty minutes later, she thought it was impossible to discover anything more depressing than to watch a rehearsal.

As she leant back in the shadow of the curtains the remembrance of the last occasion when she had been in the theatre occurred to her. It was only three months ago, she reflected. She had had a box—the very box she was in just now, she noticed with a start—for Irving in *Hamlet*, and Dick Hilton had been one of the party occupying it with her. Every incident of that memorable evening came back to her with a startling vividness; she seemed to be living it over again this afternoon. When the performance was over they had gone to the Savoy for supper, and he had shared the hansom that took her back, tired but very happy, to South Kensington afterwards. What a long time ago it all seemed now! She wondered if she would ever be really happy again.

So occupied was she in her reflections that she did not hear a tap at the door behind her. Nor, when it opened, and an attendant ushered someone into the box did she turn round. It was only through hearing, a moment later, a chair being moved beside her, that she became conscious that she was not alone. She looked round with a start at the discovery. As she did so she saw that the newcomer was a man. His face was turned from her, but, despite the gloom enveloping the box, she recognised, as she thought, something strangely familiar in the visitor's outline. A sudden impulse prompted her to touch his hand gently, and, scarcely conscious of what she was doing, she leant back for the purpose.

The man turned his head at the movement. A sudden light leapt into his eyes. Half-rising from his seat, he held out both his hands in welcome. "Muriel!" he cried. "So you are here, after all?"

"Dick—Dick! Is it really you at last?" she answered. "Have you come back to me again?"

He leant forward and kissed her by way of reply.

"But how did you know I was here?" she demanded a moment later.

"George Mortimer—bless him!—telephoned to me at the club half-an-hour ago that it was most important that I should go to box 'A' at the Lyceum this afternoon. He said I'd know why when I got there."

"And do you, dear?" she whispered softly.

His answer seemed to satisfy her, for at six o'clock the editor of the *Empire Magazine* received the following telegram: "Can finish the story, after all. I have found the 'happy ending.' Muriel Elliott."

Phil Greet.

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The Big Blue Diamond.

THE EXPERIENCES OF AN "I. D. B."

CHAPTER I.

Zulu Pete, from Kimberley.

I, GERALD WETTON, and my partner, Jack Lane, were eating and resting, at the close of the toughest day's work we had known since we had pitched, three months before, at Waaisveld, on the Transvaal border.

To make it worse we had taken—just nothing. Other days, a few sparklets, perhaps, or diamond clippings, had rewarded our efforts, but this day—nothing!

"Jack," said I, despondingly, "this will never do! Old Viljoen knew what he was about when he sold us this rotten claim as being richly diamondiferous—and then *trekked*."

"I'd wring his neck if I had him here now," replied Jack grimly. "It's only that pretty daughter of his, Minnie, that would save him."

"Well, it's no use crying over spilt milk," said I. "I vote for a hark back to Kimberley in the morning."

"Just as you like, my boy!" said Lane. "I'm willing to follow my leader—meaning you—to Prester John's Land, if needs be, and if you only know where it is."

I do not suppose that the bag of stones we had actually "mined" would have fetched more than three hundred pounds in open market; though that is not to say that we were unpossessed of diamonds—some of them grand stones—got in another way.

Indeed, I make no secret of the fact that I bought stones of the blacks who passed by our claim at Waaisveld, on their way back to their several tribes.

These stones were, of course, in the first instance, stolen, and then concealed in the hair, beneath the skin, and in many another way. Equally, of course, I was acting illegally in thus illicitly purchasing; but when, as often happened, a fine stone was offered me at a price so absurdly below its real value that it amounted almost to a free gift of the gem, it was a temptation hard of resistance.

On this particular evening when, our meal finished, and everything, including our waggon and oxen, made snug for the night, we sat smoking our pipes, each of us thinking his own thoughts, a peculiarly weird-like hail came faintly up the valley from the south-west.

"Doesn't sound 'white,'" said Jack, listening intently. "More like a Zulu shout than anything else, and half-choked at that."

"It's certainly not 'white,'" I said. "Hark! there it is again!"

It was nearly dark, and though our fire cast a fairly big circle of light, we could not see more than a few yards in any direction.

Startlingly sudden, then, was the almost noiseless intrusion into the light-circle of a miserable, half-starved-looking Zulu.

He did not speak, but pointed, with skinny finger, to his mouth.

"The beggar's hungry," said Jack.

The newcomer seemed to understand, and made a ghastly attempt to smile.

"Here!" I said, reaching out for some of the remains of our own meal, and pushing them towards him. "Get that into you!"

He did not eat; he ravenously tore at, and bolted the food.

"Hasn't had anything to eat for a week, I should say!" said Jack.

The wretched-looking object nodded energetically in acquiescence.

His only clothing was a tattered waist-cloth and a broken, crownless old straw hat.

From the first I noticed a strange thing about him. An intermittent, half-turning of the head in a listening way.

Then I spoke to him.

"Where from, matey?"

But he only shook his head.

"Are you dumb, or what's the matter with you?" said Jack impatiently.

The only answer was a broader grin and a wider shake of the head. Then something seemed to strike him, for he opened wide his naturally enormous mouth and

we saw, by the light of the fire, that the man's tongue was gone; a harsh, guttural throat-sound being all that he was capable of.

"Poor beggar!" said Jack. "He's either been punished at the mines for diamond stealing, or at some previous time for something else by his chief. Anyway, it's a beastly brutal way of doing things."

"Yes," I said; "but I wonder what he's so worried about behind him. D'you see how he keeps his ear cocked in the direction he's just come from?"

"Yes," said Jack. "And look at him now?"

The black had suddenly sunk on to the ground in an apparent agony of terror. There he lay cowering, and emitting the most fearful noises that it is possible to conceive.

The cause of it all was soon revealed.

"Anybody at home?" came out of the darkness, valleywards, but close at hand, in strong nasal tones.

The query was followed up almost directly by the appearance at the fire-side of a tall, spare man, leading by the bridle a black Arab mare.

That is, the man was spare in a way only, being, as a matter-of-fact, well-knit and muscular.

"I reckon this to be the very luckiest thing I've struck any time these five days!" he said, the while hobbling his horse, and making himself comfortable as close to the embers as possible.

"Hullo!" he suddenly exclaimed, as his eye lit on the crouching figure of the Zulu. "Where did you spring from—you miserable dog of a diamond-thief?"

The poor wretch heard him, but took no notice.

"What's the trouble?" asked Jack. "Do you know the chap?"

"Know him! Where is the Kimberley miner who doesn't know 'Pete, the Zulu'? Why, he's stolen more stones than all the rest of the black trash at the mines put together."

"Suspected now?" I asked.

"Well, Mr.—er——"

"Wetton."

"Well, Mr. Wetton, it's like this, and darned strange, too—the beast has always managed somehow to secrete his swag, and no power on earth has ever succeeded in finding it. It's known that he's had the sparks, but he's smart enough not to let a chip even be found within a mile of his dirty person."

"Yes," I remarked, "if he's worked it that way, Mr.—er——"

"Crafte—Siever Crafte, of Chicago, City of Illinois."

"Well, Mr. Crafte, if he's worked it, as I have said, in that way he *is* smart and deserving of a certain amount of credit."

"Think so?" said our latest guest, with a peculiar screw-up of his left eye. "*I* think it's a matter of opinion, and *my* opinion is, that a short shrift, without judge or jury, is just the one thing he needs; and he should have it if I had my way."

"Sorry to say I don't agree with you," said Jack, quietly filling his pipe. "Wetton's right; and I don't care who hears me say so."

It was at this point in the conversation that I saw the black moving away, snake-like, upon his stomach.

Crafte saw him too, and made to spring up. Jack, however, caught hold of the Yankee by the right wrist, and kept him from rising.

"Let the poor beggar alone," said Jack. "If he has got anything belonging to you (which I very much doubt); you're not going to lynch him on *our* lot!"

"I'll put lead into him!" yelled the other, literally foaming at the mouth with rage.

Before either of us could prevent it, he had whipped out a six-shooter with his disengaged left hand.

Two almost simultaneous reports—a sharp cry—and then—silence.

Only for a moment, however. Jack released his hold on Crafte; all three of us then rushing round to the other side of the fire.

The Zulu was gone!

The only sign of him was a little pool of blood, and a trail of the same, leading away to the northward; close by the pool, as if dropped in the moment of agony and hurried escape, was a small, dirty piece of rag, evidently inclosing something.

Upon this Crafte sought to pounce, and would have succeeded in securing it had not I smartly put my foot upon it.

"It belongs to me! I tell you! It is mine! He stole it from me!"

"I've only your word for that," said I quietly; "and as I am not disposed to take your word as being sufficient evidence of your right of ownership in—in whatever this piece of rag may contain, why, I shall hold on—eh! Jack!"

"Certainly!" said Jack, playing warningly with his own revolver.

"You're a couple of dead beats!" hissed Crafte, almost inarticulate with disappointed spleen. "But don't think you'll score on the odd trick. I'll have it! mark you!—I'll have it—and that within forty-eight hours!"

He made a half-movement as if to fire at one or both of us, but Jack covered him with his own weapon, and he thought better of it.

Unhobbling his horse he sprang into the saddle, gave a vindictive cut with his heavy whip on the animal's flanks, and a still more cruel dig of his spurs into its sides, and galloped off at breakneck speed down the valley, in the direction he had come.

We looked at one another, Jack and I; then I lifted my foot, and picked up the dirty little parcel.

It was hard, and, with the covering, about the size of an ordinary hen's egg.

Slowly I unwrapped the casing of filthy linen.

"Good Heavens!" exclaimed Jack, as a curiously coloured rough stone was revealed.

It was a big blue diamond!

CHAPTER II.

The Siege of Viljoen's Farm.

It was towards the close of the day following our big "find," that Jack and I rode up to the "stoep" of the low-pitched frame building that old Viljoen had set up for a homestead on his new land.

We were both of us tired out with our long ride; but Jack, with thoughts of pretty Minnie Viljoen in his heart, had been a spur to my laggard journeying. And now, as if it were a reward for his brave persistency, Minnie herself was out there to greet us.

She was as winsome a specimen of Dutch beauty as could be found in a day's march. Her hair was a rich flaxen, and in such abundance that it was rather a trouble to her than otherwise. Her eyes were so tender of expression that it is not to be wondered at that Jack was magnetised by them beyond redemption.

I left the two together while I sought the farmer and his "vrou."

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Old Viljoen was not a bad sort of old chap in his way, though we fancied that he had overreached us a bit in the bargain for Waaisveld.

When I had explained to him the object of our surprise visit, he expressed himself pretty strongly upon one or two points.

"This American!" he said. "I think I know him. If he is the man I saw in Kimberley six months ago, then you had better look out. He's dangerous; and would think no more of killing you to get that stone than he did when he cut poor Pete the Zulu's tongue out, two years ago, by way of revenge."

"Did *he* do that?" I cried. "Then, if I ever meet him again, I'll shoot him in his tracks, as sure as my name is Gerald Wetton! Why, the man's a fiend!"

"He's just that!" said the old Dutchman, nodding his head vigorously. "But he's hard to trap. They tried at Kimberley to make him answer for his treatment of Pete, but he wriggled out of it. He's got sacks of money; but he's greedy—he's greedy! and if he's made up his mind to have this stone you've got—why, he'll play every trick he knows to get it."

"Well, Mr. Viljoen, my idea is this—we will intrust this diamond to you so long as we think necessary; you undertaking to hand it over only to me or Jack Lane. If this fellow Crafte follows us up, expecting to find it on or about us, he'll be disappointed. There may be trouble—there probably will; but—he won't get the stone."

"Ah! good! You trust me! Yes. I am Viljoen's—a rough old Dutchman; but he wouldn't rob you of a 'schilling's' worth. No! he would *die* rather!"

And so it was settled. We were to stop and sleep at Hagspruit that night, and were to return to Waaisveld in the early morning.

After supper I handed the stone to our host, who, for the moment, put it into an inner pocket of his coat.

"Ah!" cried Minnie, who was helping the maid to clear away. "Look!—a man's face at the window!"

We all of us ran outside on to the "stoep," but could see no one. All was silent as the grave.

"I am sure I saw a face," said Minnie, when we had come indoors again. "A long thin face, with no hair or beard on it."

The old farmer laughed, and told his daughter she was love-dreaming, whereat both she and Jack looked confused, and, it must be confessed, a bit foolish.

I should fancy that it must have been between one and two in the morning that Jack woke me, saying that he heard men's voices, and the tramping of feet round about the house.

I sat up and listened.

"By George! you're right, Jack! there's something wrong!"

As I spoke I sprang out of bed, Jack doing the same, and rapidly putting on my boots and trousers, approached the window to look out.

I suppose my white shirt afforded the mark, for immediately two bullets splashed on the side frame.

The two reports woke the old farmer, whom I heard shouting to the three hired men to get up and help him to see what was the matter.

"Va! va! you lazy rascals! the place will be burnt before you move! My 'sjamjok' shall be about your shoulders, if you're not out of it!"

Then all was hurly-burly.

Finding themselves discovered, the assailants—one or two of whom we could see were whites—directed a furious fusilade against the house.

The three women—old Mrs. Viljoen, Minnie, and the Dutch servant—remained in a small room at the back of the house used as a store-place.

But Minnie did not long keep out of danger. Before Jack could prevent her, she was in amongst us, handing ammunition, and even loading the rifles and revolvers.

"That's got one!" said Jack excitedly, as the flash of a torch outside showed a big man, in high boots, grey shirt, and a broad-brimmed felt hat, throw up his arms, as Jack's bullet reached him and fall on his face.

At the same moment, and by the same light, I saw Siever Crafte, revolver in hand, spring forward and make for the window leading on to the "stoep."

Old Viljoen was guarding that window, and I shouted to him to beware.

At the instant I cried: "Look out, farmer!" the window was dashed in, Crafte fired twice in rapid succession, and with a cry and a groan, poor old Viljoen fell—dead!

What followed was lightning-like and bewildering.

Instant with the fall of the old farmer, Crafte stooped, wrenched open the dead man's vest; tore from the bosom of his shirt the packet containing the stone; and turned and fled.

I emptied my revolver after him, as soon as I could collect my senses. Jack did the same, although poor Minnie's cries of distress, as she hung over her father's body, broke his aim.

It was all of no use; with the exception of the man Jack had shot just before, there was not a living soul within sight or sound of Hagspruit.

The big blue diamond was gone!

CHAPTER III.

A Rumour, and What Came of It.

I have just heard, in a reliable quarter, that a *blue diamond*—the biggest ever known—has, within the past fortnight, been offered for sale in St. Petersburg, to the Tsar himself, by a certain wealthy American, who says that he purchased it six months ago from the man who found it.

This information has determined me to leave at once for the Russian capital, in order that I may, if possible, expose Siever Crafte (evidently the wealthy American aforesaid) and recover possession of the treasure of which he has robbed me.

Jack remains in South Africa to look after our joint interests there, and to care for the two women so pathetically cast upon his pitiful consideration.

* * * * *

Winter in St. Petersburg is something to be reckoned with.

In the Nevsky Prospect is a certain jeweller's shop much patronised by the Imperial Family; and on a day when a *drosky* set me down at its door, the snow, drifted by an icy wind, was half-way up its windows.

Ivan Sovski, the proprietor of the establishment, had not been prepared for my coming; I had reasons for making my visit a genuinely surprise one. It was the first move in a game of wits.

And the first move drew a blank.

"The 'blue diamond,' your excellency!" said old Ivan, with well-simulated astonishment, and regarding me cautiously from under his half-closed eyelids. "I have it not! I would like to have one—a good specimen—for His Imperial Majesty would give me my price for it—yes!"

I could not shake him; and so, here I was foiled at the very outset.

I might possibly have accepted the apparently inevitable, and turned back, when a good providence came to my aid and stayed my retreat.

A clatter—a jingling of sleigh-bells—an authoritative command or two in a hoarse voice, and an officer of the Imperial Guard entered the place.

There was much whispered, earnest conversation between Sovski and the Court emissary, mingled with many a side-glance from the former towards myself.

"Well," said I, on the officer's departure, "I am convinced now, M. Sovski, that you are deceiving me, and that the blue diamond I am in search of, and which is my property, is at this moment in the Winter Palace, the subject of the Tsar's consideration."

The jeweller wished to argue with me, but I declined to bandy words with him, and ordered my driver to proceed straight to the Bureau of the Minister of Police.

I found, on my arrival there, that the Minister was engaged. There being nothing unusual in this, I sat me down in an ante-room to wait patiently for my turn.

Presently the Minister's door opened and closed, and I heard footsteps descending the main staircase.

"M. Gerald Wetton?" said a voice at my side.

I started and looked up.

I bowed; and the voice—that of an officer of police—went on:

"Then, M. Wetton, I must trouble you to come with me."

He was very polite, but he did not usher me into the presence of the Minister. Something told me I was, in a way, in custody.

I got into my drosky again; but this time in company.

"The Winter Palace!" ordered the police-agent.

Arrived, we, after a brief wait, were conducted to a plainly-furnished room—empty.

I have been desired to suppress certain things that I saw and heard there, so will merely tell just sufficient to make clear the end of the story.

It seems that Siever Crafte had become cognisant of my presence in St. Petersburg, and of my business there. First putting in train, through Ivan Sovski, negotiations for the sale to the Tsar of the blue diamond, he then endeavoured to get me officially silenced until the sale should have been completed.

Like most clever people, however, he reckoned without his host, which, in this particular instance, was his Majesty's own suspicions of the American's *bona-fides*.

Arrangements were, therefore, made to confront us in the Imperial presence, when the Tsar would himself determine, from signs and evidence, whether I, Gerald Wetton, was the impudent pretender to the gem's possession that Siever Crafte claimed me to be.

How the Yankee adventurer contrived to elude the watchfulness of his police guardian, it is hard to say; but so it was—a heavy bribe being, probably, at the bottom of it. The officer had to confess that he could not produce his charge,

This was enough to clear me in official eyes, and I was able, in a few words, to prove my ownership of the jewel which now, I believe, forms part of His Majesty's Most Gracious Consort's uniquely magnificent collection of gems.

* * * * *

A few months later, in a rehabilitated "Hagspruit," Jack, and I together with Minnie and her mother, sat round the fire in a cosy "house-place" discussing the future.

Jack and I had already divided the sale-money of the blue diamond, he electing to marry Minnie and settle down at Hagspruit, while I decided to return to England, from which I had been absent for many years.

It was when we were dispersing, to retire to rest, that Jack spoke the last word.

"Gerald, old chum!" he said, smiling, and laying his hands on my shoulders. "I'll make a prophecy!"

"Yes," I said, "what is it?"

"That you won't stop in England six months."

And Jack was quite right, for long before the six months were up, I was back again at Waaisveld, this time alone.

But I never found another "big blue diamond."

Ralph Enderby.

He Wouldn't Like it.

Clara: "Well, dear, I am going to marry the Earl of Broadstairs." Maud: "Then what are you looking so glum about it for?" Clara: "I am afraid my *fiancé* won't like it. Men are so selfish."

Splendid Scheme.

"I've hit upon a great scheme," said a provincial editor. "I nearly doubled our circulation yesterday." "How did you work it?" "See that steel stamp? Well, I just cut out a paragraph in the local column of the whole edition." "How did that help the circulation?" "Every man in the town brought an extra copy to see what had been cut out."

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A Question of Identity.

By R. NORMAN SILVER.

CHAPTER 1.

An Interesting Client.

"Joyce, dear, are you not coming to get some lunch? It is past one o'clock, and you have been at work since nine. Your poor hands must be frozen with that water."

A gay little laugh greeted this anxious question as a trim figure in a black gown and a big alpaca apron turned towards the open door of the small room. The chamber was bare and carpetless, its contents a fixed bench, laden with bottles and dishes, a pine-topped table, and a few cupboards.

Outside the large, uncurtained sashes of the single wide casement, a chill winter day frowned over a panorama of roofs and chimney-stacks, making the task which had just been interrupted seem unenviable enough. The girl at the window, her fingers dipped into a trough under a still running tap, was washing a dozen sheets of limp paper.

"Use is second nature, Marion," she remarked; "and as for lunch, I had a couple of biscuits an hour ago—I keep a tin on the premises. But you will be famishing, and so will Teddie; I was a brute to forget that you won't take your meals without me."

She dried her hands on her apron, gained the door and stepped through, putting an arm round the waist of the woman who had been standing on the threshold. The apartment beyond was extensive and airy, boasting a glass lean-to running its whole length. A quaint assortment of furniture, some rolls of painted canvas, a camera, and the huge focussing funnel of an arc-light, revealed the purpose of the place. It was a photographer's studio. On the mounts of the innumerable portraits and enlargements strewn about, was the conspicuous inscription: "Joyce Hammond, Day and Electric-light Studios, South Street, Scholes."

Joyce herself, dark, slender, active, moved with the graceful ease of a young and pretty woman. Her companion was older, graver, sterner, and while Joyce's rippling locks were of a raven blackness, the other's brown tresses were sown with tell-tale silver threads. Yet there was sufficient resemblance between the faces of both to suggest that they were sisters.

"Well," asked Joyce, briskly, as they crossed the floor to a narrow staircase that ascended in a distant corner, "and how goes on the mounting?"

Marion sighed.

"Not as fast as it ought to, Jo, dear!" she responded; "you made a bad bargain when you engaged me—I am not worth my salt. Teddie and I should have stopped in New Zealand and died. What claim have James Lichfield's deserted wife and child on anybody?"

"Rubbish!" cried Joyce. "Rome was not built in a day; you are beautifully neat, and speed will come to you with practice. Besides, don't you provide the cosiest lunches and teas and so save my purse and my digestion from the restaurant-keepers? Don't be a goose, May!"

She led the way up the awkward flight to reach a third floor of the suite which was described in professional advertisements as the "Studios." It was extremely diminutive and occupied by a coal-stove, some chairs, and a brace of tables, one covered by a variety of apparatus and a score of prints, mounted and unmounted; one laid for a meal. Near this latter was seated a handsome boy of five or six years, whose pale cheeks and intensely bright eyes bore witness to a delicate constitution.

"What a long time you've been, auntie Joyce!" he observed, pathetically; "I am so hungry."

Joyce stooped and kissed him.

"It was thoughtless of me, Teddie," she confessed, throwing off her apron; "but never mind, it shan't occur again. And what has mother for lunch this morning?"

The child put up his face to whisper:

"Steak!" he said, "and mushrooms; mother knew you liked them—isn't it a nice surprise?"

"It is, indeed," admitted Joyce, cutting a loaf of bread expertly as her sister deposited a steaming dish on the table; "your mother is a witch, Teddie. I hope I haven't spoilt the steak, that's all."

Marion Lichfield filled the three plates that had been heating on the stove. Her little son contemplated the plump white "buttons" of the mushrooms.

"Father was fond of mushrooms," he commented, "but ours came out of bottles, didn't they, mother? You used to cook them for father."

The elder of the listeners bit her lip and Joyce set down the bread-knife hastily to create a diversion.

"There," was her tactful interruption, "enjoy yours, Teddie dear, and don't trouble mother at present; she—she has a headache."

"That's with cooking," decided the child; "I am sorry, mother darling, but I will be quite quiet and then it will be better soon."

He paused—a bell had sounded in the studio underneath. Joyce pushed back her chair; she had just addressed herself to her belated meal.

"My luck!" she said; "but I shall be thankful if it is a customer; things have been ghastly this month. As for my lunch, you can keep it warm on the stove—business before pleasure."

She straightened her collar, smoothed her hair at a circular mirror hung over the stove and hastened down the irregular staircase, to the floor below.

Within the door that gave admission to the studio from the corridor of the building was a tall, broad-shouldered personage, clad in a rough serge suit and carrying a discoloured sombrero. His firm chin and strong mouth were almost hidden by a dense black beard. Seeing her, he bowed.

"Good afternoon!" he remarked, "is Mr. Hammond in—the gentleman who takes the portraits, I mean?"

Joyce flushed.

"There is no Mr. Hammond," she retorted. "I am Joyce Hammond, and at your service."

The newcomer whistled and instantly apologised. "Excuse me," he answered—his accent, though pleasant, was not that of the home-bred Briton—"but I read the

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whirly lettering on the photos in the case at the entrance as an abbreviation of 'Joseph'—J-o-s and an *h* written higher up, you know. Ten thousand pardons; I am charmed to make your acquaintance, Miss—or is it Mrs. Hammond?"

The girl received this ingenuous explanation with much gravity.

"Miss will do," she told him; "you were thinking of having some photographs—of yourself, I presume."

"Exactly," was the rejoinder; "and prowling round to discover a johnny who could turn out a portrait that wasn't a frightful insult to our common humanity, I—I noticed the specimens exhibited below. Miss Hammond, I congratulate you—you are a dandy photographer and no error."

Joyce reddened once more at the compliment to her skill.

"Th—thank you!" she stammered; "I—I do try to be an artist, as far as the camera will let me. What kind of photo do you want?" She reached to a pile of samples but her client waved them aside.

"Look here," he said, "I've been landed at this one-horse seaport of yours from an old wind-jammer—sailing-ship, you understand, mile-a-day cargo-boat. She picked me up and two or three others in the Pacific—we were all that was left of the *Amphiboa*, a Weldon liner, Vancouver to Auckland."

The young photographer was secretly admiring the stalwart, breezy figure of the narrator; he seemed an ideal hero of a romance of the ocean. Unconscious of her scrutiny he went on with his tale.

"The *Amphiboa*," he pursued, "met a squall off the coast of North Island (that's the top half of New Zealand) was blown out of her course and struck a barren reef in the southern Pacific. We launched five boats, and none of the other four—they say at Lloyd's—have been heard of."

The cheerful, sun-burnt visage of her unconventional customer grew sad and reverent.

"Poor beggars!" he murmured; "only a few miles from home, and then, a fifty-six hours' gale and destruction. Deuced hard lines, and lots of them going home to wives and kids."

Joyce gazed at him absorbedly; she felt that she could see the catastrophe he described with such succinctness, the long fight against the pitiless gale, the wreck upon the reef, the days in the open boat, the unexpected rescue! Her customer roused her.

"What's done, is done," he added; "and we can quote Shakespeare to prove that it's no use worrying about what can't be remedied. I cabled to New Zealand, got some money and references, and now I'm off to London. But I wanted a picture of myself as I came ashore a week ago, so I've kept the beard a few hours more, put on these togs again and this hat, which I bought of a sailor for some tobacco. Make a good picture of me and charge me top-rates. I like that darkish-brown thing you have in the case below. A dozen of that sort might do me, I fancy."

A sigh of pleasure escaped Joyce Hammond—he was ordering a carbon panel, worth five guineas a dozen. It was months since she had had a similar commission.

"Will you—will you sit now?" she asked, glancing towards the camera. He assented, and she stepped to the end of the studio to arrange for the operation. Her latest task had been the photographing of a family group, and the floor was still lumbered by the inevitable accessories. Joyce began to drag them aside.

"By Jove!" cried her athletic client, "let me do that." And he flung down his picturesque hat and effected a clearance in a twinkling. "Shall we need any of this stuff?" he demanded, as he surveyed the medley of chairs, settees, pedestals, hassocks on either hand, an empty space between backed by a painted cloth representing the interior of a middle-class drawing-room.

Joyce shook her head, she had been studying him while he worked. A pull at a cord sent the background out of sight, Joyce hauled down another—a plain one, with a few simple lights and shadows. Before it she threw a strip of artificial turf.

"Please stand there," she said, "and hold your hat in your hand?"

The other nodded approvingly and obeyed. He was a fine subject for a full-length portrait and settled easily into the desired pose; a certain stamp of breeding showed through his rough costume and swarthy complexion, his beard, crisp and curling, feathered naturally over his deep chin.

"We need something else," decided the operator; "you look too like a soldier standing at ease. Wait, I have it."

She hastened to a pile of oddments in a convenient nook, picked up a short-handled, long-thonged whip of plaited hide and brought it to him.

"Crush your hat slightly in your fingers," she instructed, "and grasp the whip with the same hand, the lash looped and dangling."

He did as she commanded. Joyce frowned thoughtfully, then went to peer at him through the camera, adjusting the focussing-cloth over her pretty head and pondering his image on the ground-glass screen.

"Yes," she declared, "that is perfect; please remain as you are till I fetch the plate."

She dived into a cramped dark roomf whose ruby pane admitted the faintest gleam from the studio, shut a door, and left her client alone for a minute. That gentleman played with his whip and took stock of his surroundings.

"Smart little girl!" he muttered; "proud and independent, and clever, I'll bet. Beastly shame for her to have to earn her living in this hole. Wonder if she does earn it; anyhow, she's plucky to try. By Jupiter!" he added suddenly, "I'll have two dozen of those photos and I'll get her to do some of me after I've scraped off this confounded hair—sort of 'before' and 'after'—dashed if I don't!"

His communings with himself were checked by the arrival of Joyce bearing the slide containing the plate for the production of the negative. She contemplated critically the reflection of his attitude on the focussing-screen, put on the cap, slipped in the slide, and drew up the flap.

"Ready?" she said. Her customer relapsed into statuesque calm; Joyce whisked off the cap, counted silently, and replaced it.

"I will make sure it is all right," she announced, and return to her mysterious sanctum. There was a chime of tinkling glass and rattled porcelain, then the splash of water and an interval, which the sitter, or rather the stander, spent in regarding a three-quarter enlargement of Joyce herself.

"You're a daisy," he muttered, "and real grit, or I'm no judge! I'll have to have a picture of you for a memento."

With great coolness he sorted out a platinotype cabinet of the little photographer, brushed the dust off it, and surveyed it appreciatively and pocketed it.

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A second later Joyce had reappeared. Her fingers were wet, and she held between them a dripping negative.

"Very good," she announced, sloping it dexterously to the light. The original looked and saw on the plate that ghostly but marvellous representation which it is possible to obtain by reflection from most negatives.

"The dickens!" he exclaimed; "that is excellent. Do me two dozen, Miss Hammond — I have hosts of friends down under and they'll all want one. Oh, and when I have got rid of my beard and doffed this rig-out for the last time in favour of some decent clothes, I shall ask you to have another shot at me. Would —would to-morrow do?"

"Certainly," said Joyce, with an ill-concealed satisfaction; "any hour in the morning, after nine—eleven would suit me quite. But I don't know what name to —to——"

"To book them to," concluded her client; "absurd, credit is not for a bird of passage like me, I will pay something on account." He snatched out a pocket-book and gave her a note—for five pounds. "As for the name," he proceeded, "I am Edward Chaloner, of Dundalk, New Zealand, and the Crescent Hotel, Scholes. For the present, Miss Hammond, *au revoir*. I will call at eleven in the morning more fittingly attired to pay my respects to a lady of your attainments."

He bowed, smiled, accepted a receipt for the note, glanced at her absently, and departed as one who is lost in thought. Joyce studied the reflected "positive" again.

"He is very nice!" she sighed; "young and manly, and frank and generous. Heigho! there are pleasanter people in the world than I had grown to believe. I must show him to Marion."

She crossed the studio and ran up the rickety stairs with the negative.

"May," she cried, springing into the tiny room at the stairhead, "here's a stroke of luck, an order for two dozen carbon panels and five pounds on account. Such a handsome fellow—he had been shipwrecked and brought to England on a cargo-boat. He wishes to have a memento of his experiences, so came with a beard like a pilgrim and in a slop suit. But of course he is a gentleman." She held the plate for her sister to see.

Marion Lichfield started up.

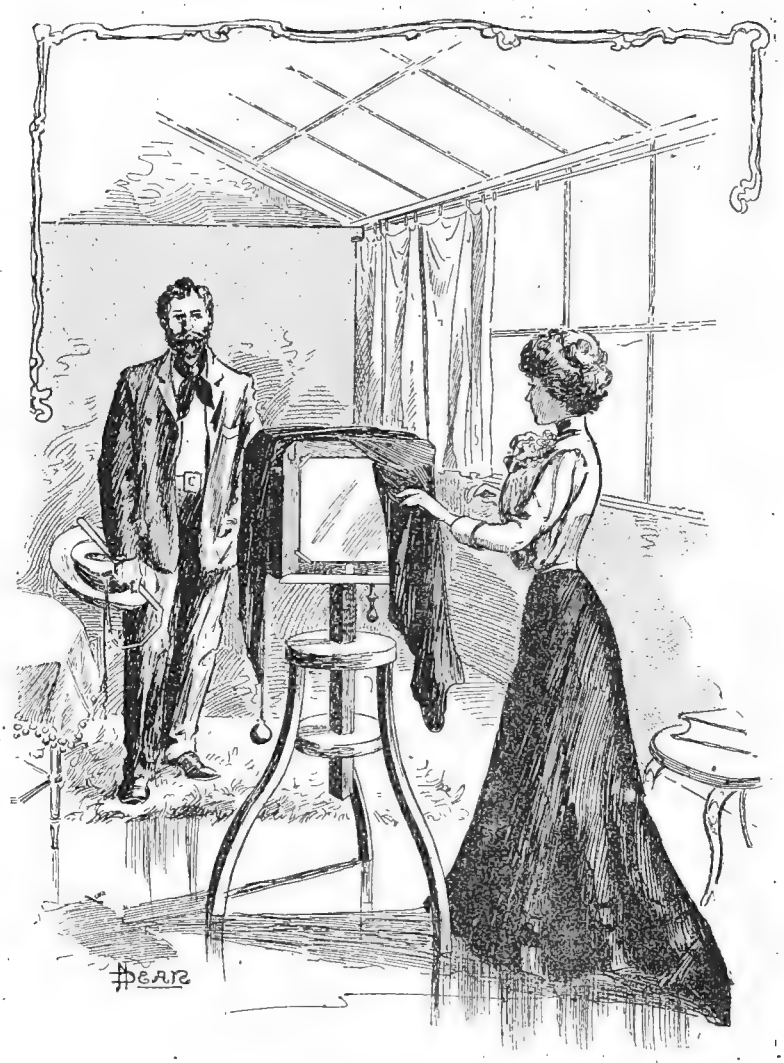
"Joyce," she gasped, "do you know who this man is?"

The younger woman gazed at her, surprised.

"Yes," she said, "a Mr. Edward Chaloner, of Dundalk, New Zealand."

Her sister staggered and leant against the table for support. The child Teddie crept to her side, alarmed by her demeanour. His mother lowered her voice that it might reach only Joyce's ears.

"An old alias!" she whispered; "I have heard ti often. Joyce, this is a portrait of my husband!"



"Yes," she declared, "that is perfect; please remain as you are till I fetch the plate."

CHAPTER II.

A Letter and an Arrest.

"Are you quite—quite sure—it is he, Marion; would not your husband have recognised my name and betrayed some alarm, however little? Though he has never seen me before, he will know that I exist. I wrote to you sometimes, and you must have spoken of me."

Joyce held up a print of the negative she had taken the preceding day; the picture was a fine one, she could not help admiring the athletic pose and vigorous life of the figure in the rough garments.

Marion Lichfield sneered as she bent over the task of mounting her sister's photographs.

"Jim is not the sort to be easily thrown off his balance," she said; "he admitted himself that he thought the mark on the portraits in the case at the door was 'Joseph Hammond.' If he had read it as Joyce he would never have crossed the threshold, I'll wager."

The younger woman pondered the argument.

"I wouldn't be too positive, Marion dear," she urged; "you've no idea how deceiving a beard is to the eye. Perhaps if you saw his face clean-shaven you would laugh at the thought of imagining him to be your husband."

A shrug of her shoulders was Marion Lichfield's answer.

"Do you fancy I'm a fool, Joyce?" she added; "why, the alias he gave you helps to prove his identity—he used to call himself Edward Chaloner more often than not. No, it's Jim, flush of money for the moment and spending it recklessly as usual."

Joyce abandoned the controversy.

"What will you do about it?" she asked, laying down the wet print and turning to warm her chilled fingers at the stove. The child Teddie had fallen asleep over a toy engine, his arms on the table at which his mother worked, and his head resting upon them. Joyce stepped to him and moved him gently into a less uncomfortable attitude.

Marion had been considering the question put to her.

"I shan't see him," she announced. "I hate him for leaving the boy to starve; I always shall hate him. But I should like him to learn that I know where he is, and that he is squandering pounds on the indulgence of his own vanity while his son and I sponge on you."

"Please, please, Marion!" begged her sister.

But Marion Lichfield continued fiercely:

"I'm going out about the time you expect him—Teddie shall stop, though. When Jim comes tell him he has been recognised, and if he denies it, call the boy. That will convince you."

Joyce took up the portrait of the man who had introduced himself as Edward Chaloner and showed it nervously to the resentful Marion.

"Dear," she murmured, "don't be so hard; he doesn't seem as if he could be all bad. Wouldn't it be splendid if you found he didn't desert you—if it was an accident. It might have been—he was shipwrecked, he says."

Marion Lichfield stamped her foot.

"Joyce," she cried, "I've no patience with you for believing his fairy tales; he warned me when he left me in New Zealand and went to America that we should not meet again. But there, you're not to blame, I suppose; Jim has a glib tongue and could twist a woman round his finger so long as she wasn't his wife."

Joyce looked at her watch—a bell had just rung below.

"Half-past ten," she said; "that is some people for a group sitting I arranged to do early. Eleven o'clock was what I told Mr—Mr. Chaloner."

"Very well," vouchsafed Marion drily; "I will go as soon as I can. And when he does put in an appearance, Joyce, you can let him know that I wouldn't see him again if—if he were on his death-bed."

Her sister shuddered but kept silence, and with a mute caress to the slumbering child, hurried down to keep her appointment. Marion worked on steadily, her thin hands twitching as she laboured; she was not a woman to forgive easily such a wrong as that which had thrown her upon Joyce's generosity, and yet the latter's appeal had stung her to the quick; she shrank from realising that her husband had so powerfully impressed his romantic personality upon the girl as to lead her to plead his cause with his actual victim. She grew almost jealous and even contemplated remaining to witness the interview. But pride was too much for her; she rose, donned her hat and cloak, and descended to the studio.

Joyce was posing a group of young folks, who laughed and chattered provokingly. Marion passed them with a nod to the operator and went out at the principal exit. As she drew the door ajar, she encountered a ragged lad on the point of entering.

"Beg pardon, ma'am!" he said, "but is there a party of the name of Mrs. Lichfield here? I've a letter for her."

Marion surveyed him, hesitating; she could think of none who was likely to send her a communication save by post.

"I—I am Mrs. Lichfield," she replied; "Mrs. James Lichfield."

"Right, oh," declared the messenger; "then this is for you, ma'am," and he produced a dirty envelope, directed in a scrawl the sight of which made Marion's heart leap into her mouth. It was that of her husband.

Hurriedly she tore it open; a scrap of soiled paper fell out. She unfolded it and gathered the purport of the epistle at a glance. Its contents were brief, and ran—

"My dear Wife,—

"If ever you loved me, come to me when you get this. You'll be surprised to find that I'm in England. I reached London on a sailing-ship. I had to hook it out of New Zealand over some bother about a cheque. Hearing you were with Joyce I made for Scholes, arrived yesterday, and was going to try and see you when I met with an accident and fear I am dying. Come to me, Marion, and don't tell a soul where I am."

The letter was signed "Your wretched husband, Jim," and had postscript, "You may trust the bearer."

Marion stared at the missive; the writing was her husband's beyond doubt, though weak and straggling enough. She had been right after all. Edward Chaloner was James Lichfield, and, prompted by his accustomed caution, he must have been spying out the state of affairs without committing himself.

The order he had given and the five pounds he had left must have been for her sake rather than Joyce's. the pretence of misreading the name on the specimens at the street entrance a mere trick to divert suspicion. He had meant to ask for her on his next call, perhaps to intreat her pardon. And now he was dying! Marion had no thought for his hinted crime, no thought for Joyce or the child: she was consumed by a burning desire to be near him.

"I am ready!" she told the ragged youth, who had studied her curiously during her consideration of the letter; "show me the way."

The lad nodded and began to slouch down the long flights that led to the ground floor of the building. Marion followed him. A few moments later they were lost in the motley crowd that drifted past the narrow lobby which gave upon the chief thoroughfare of the sea-port town.

Hardly had they disappeared than a smartly-dressed person entered the passage and leapt up the stone steps three at a time. Clean-shaven as he was, it would not have been difficult to recognise in him the identical caller, who, bearded like the bard and clad in a very

different costume, had visited Joyce Hammond the previous afternoon under the style of Edward Chaloner.

Arrived at the topmost landing, he turned the knob of the studio-door and went in. The members of the "group" had gone and the room was empty. The sound of the bell, however, brought Joyce from the small upper chamber. As she descended the rickety stairs, he smiled and advanced to meet her.

"Good morning!" he began, gazing at her grave little countenance with obvious admiration.

Joyce set her level brows and red lips and answered him curtly:

"Good morning, Mr. Lichfield!" was her unexpected retort.

The man thus addressed regarded her amazedly.

"There is some misapprehension," he replied; "I am Edward Chaloner, and I have an appointment for a sitting at eleven o'clock."

"Exactly!" intimated Joyce; "and as your wife saw the portrait I took yesterday she was able to recognise in Mr. Edward Chaloner her own profligate husband. As for the name, it is an old alias of yours."

"Are you mad?" stammered the other; "I am Edward Chaloner and I can prove it, though, unluckily, not without notice, for I know no one in Scholes. I have already explained my position to you, Miss Hammond, and I fail to comprehend why you should credit absurd statements as to my identity. But as I have got rid of my beard, you have only to photograph me and send a copy to Dundalk, New Zealand, and you will be told by cable that I am Edward Chaloner, only son of Edward Chaloner, Commissioner of Police for Dundalk, and that I am myself a bachelor. If I am supposed to be married, why not confront me with the lady?"

"She refuses to see you," said Joyce, warmed by his audacity; "even if you were on your death-bed she would not come to you. But you shall see your child — the boy you deserted, to starve or not — as Fate might decide!"

Darting to the foot of the distant stair, she called softly and a little figure crept down it. Joyce caught up her nephew and stepped back across the room.

The boy did not allow her time to speak, but with a cry of "Father!" stretched out his arms and struggled to free himself from Joyce's grasp.

Edward Chaloner recoiled.

"This is a plot!" he cried scornfully; "a contemptible plot to blackmail me. I never saw the child in my life — poor little beggar, what hound has taught him his part in this infernal conspiracy?"

"Well!" ejaculated Joyce; "I did try to think kindly of you, Mr. Lichfield, but I am certain now that you are an unprincipled scoundrel, and I am sorry my sister ever set eyes on you, so there!"

"Your sister!" gasped the other. "Your sister! Gracious heavens, what tangle is this? Surely the child can't be perfect in his fiendish lesson—let me cross-examine him."

Joyce sprang back

"You shan't touch him," she said; "all you can do is to go and—and quickly."

Her advice was not acted upon. "Edward Chaloner" stood as if paralysed, contemplating her.

Suddenly the door behind him was thrust open and a couple of bluecoats, surmounted by spiked helmets, appeared, "Edward Chaloner" was clutched by the elbows and pinioned.

"Very good!" commented a calm voice. "James Lichfield, I arrest you on the charge of forging, at Wellington, New Zealand, a cheque for sixty pounds on the Bank of Australasia, in September of last year. An application will be made in due course for your transmission to Wellington for trial. Anything you say hereafter may be taken down and used in evidence against you."

The speaker, a pompous giant in the uniform of a detective-inspector, stalked into the studio and gained the side of "Edward Chaloner."

CHAPTER III.

The White Scar.

"I AM not the person you imagine me to be, and I warn you that in arresting and detaining me you are rendering yourselves liable to a suit for damages. You see I know a little of the law, my dad was not Police-Commissioner at Dundalk for nothing."

The maker of these remarks folded his arms on the steel bar of the charge-dock which graced the principal police-station in the small town of Scholes, and surveyed disdainfully a group consisting of a detective-inspector and two constables. Behind them, at the charge-desk sat a sergeant, his pen in his fingers. Close to stood Joyce Hammond herself, holding by the hand her shrinking nephew—the child Teddie.

The sergeant looked inquiringly at the detective, who shrugged his shoulders.

"You recognise the prisoner as James Lichfield?" he inquired of Joyce.

"The prisoner was identified, sergeant," he said, "from the description furnished to Scotland Yard by the New Zealand authorities. But in any case this young lady, his relative by marriage, knows him to be her brother-in-law, and the child, which is his, recognised him immediately on seeing him. The arrest was effected in Miss Hammond's place of business—where prisoner had no doubt gone to visit his wife, who is staying with her sister. I have left a man to bring on the wife, she being out at the time."

The sturdy official at the charge-desk coughed.

"You recognise the prisoner as James Lichfield?" he inquired of Joyce.

The photographer shook her head.

"My sister saw a portrait of him taken yesterday by me," came the reply, "before he had shaved off his beard; she said it was that of her husband—the portrait, I mean. But I never saw him, to my knowledge."

"Now, youngster," intervened the detective, addressing himself to the child at Joyce's skirts, "tell me who is that in the corner there?"

Teddie clung to Joyce.

"Please," he murmured, "it's—it's like father, but his face isn't hurt any more, and he—he won't smile at me."

"His face isn't hurt any more," repeated the sergeant, rubbing one ear meditatively; "what do you mean by that?"

For answer the boy put a finger to his own soft cheek.

"Father's face was scratched all down here," faltered the sweet treble, "and—and he said it would never go away. A man did it in a fight, with a big knife."

"Phew!" whistled the sergeant, "a scar; where is the description, inspector? the prisoner has no scar."

The other drew out a note-book and read a few lines from it. "James Lichfield," he said; "about twenty-seven years of age, five feet ten inches or thereabouts, but looks taller, muscular figure, grey eyes, straight nose, clean-shaven at date of disappearance, white scar on left cheek—near jaw bone, goes occasionally by the name of Edward Chaloner."

The sergeant had been checking off the various particulars.

"All correct," he decided, "except the scar. Well, the only person who can settle the question is the prisoner's—that is to say, James Lichfield's—wife. Till she can be found I shall not, in the absence of the scar, book the charge against the prisoner. I doubt very much whether I ought to detain him—the scar seems a necessary part of the identification. My men could, of course, keep him under observation."

The inspector twisted his moustache; he was disconcerted by this sudden flaw in his case.

"I should advise," he commenced, but paused; a third constable had entered the station and was saluting.

"Sorry not to have brought the lady, sir," he observed, "but I have seen her, and Lichfield, too—good heavens!" He had broken off to stare at the figure in the dock.

A heavy palm was laid on his shoulders, the palm of the detective-inspector.

"You've seen Lichfield," he asked brusquely; "isn't that him, then?"

The constable stammered.

"It's—it's like him," was the response. "but for the scar on his cheek, sir. The man that Mrs. Lichfield declares to be her husband is dying at a lodging-house by the docks; he was knocked down by a lorry yesterday, and some fatal injury has just developed. He had sent for her this morning secretly and she got his messenger—a lad—to go back with word to Miss Hammond. I screwed it out of him and followed up the trail."

His superior stepped to the charge-dock and raised the steel bar.

"Will you do me the favour to come out, sir?" he requested; "I am a bit of a blunderer, it seems."

Edward Chaloner laughed, relieved in spite of himself.

"Don't apologise to me," he said, "but to Miss Hammond, for disturbing her work and dragging her to this unpleasant quarter of the world."

He crossed the room and held out his hand to Joyce.

"You were sorely tempted to believe in me all the while, weren't you?" he asked; "I saw it in your eyes. Thank you for that much. And now, don't you think you had better go to your sister—they said her husband was dying, didn't they?"

Joyce clasped his strong brown fingers and a hot tear trickled down her cheek.

"I—I'm afraid I said some very harsh things to you!" she rejoined; "you must have thought me awfully unwomanly."

Edward Chaloner pressed the palms in his own.

"I thought you were just the sort of person," he confessed, "whose respect I would most wish to gain—and keep."

He turned to a constable, and spoke with the sharp inflection of habitual command.

"Get me a cab," he ordered—"a four-wheeler." He slipped a hand into his pockets and hauled up some silver. "Here, sergeant," he added, "let your men drink the health of their prisoner when they go off duty."

Twenty minutes later Edward Chaloner and Joyce Hammond stood at the bedside of James Lichfield; they had reached it too late, and the features that were so like those of the photographer's client were set in the stiff mask of death.

Marion Lichfield did not weep.

"It is better so," she said, "but I am glad he wanted me at the last."

* * * * *

Edward Chaloner sat for that second portrait, after all. Indeed, his return to New Zealand was unconsciously delayed by his interest in photography and in Miss Joyce Hammond. Nor did he go back to Dundalk alone; the Day and Electric-light Studios were sold up, their late proprietor having abandoned both single blessedness and a business life. Marion and her son remained in England, provided for by her new and wealthy brother-in-law.

Not until that gentleman had reached New Zealand with his bride, and they were settled in their up-country home, did Edward Chaloner finally solve a riddle that had long haunted him.

"By Jove!" he said one day to his wife, "that beggar Lichfield must have known he was like me—that is the explanation of his impudent alias. Teddie may even be my namesake and I never guessed it. Lucky his father did me no worse harm than giving me a bad quarter of an hour at that confounded police-station in Scholes—the rascal. But there, we will speak nothing but good of the dead—and Teddie's pater."

The Amateur Carpenter.

It is great fun to watch an amateur carpenter. He usually knows how to use tools just about as well as a hen knows how to paint a rose. He may be a good, honest, and even virtuous citizen in other respects, but when he retires to his workroom and strips off his coat and vest for a little recreation with edged tools, it is just as well not to have any of the women folks or children within hearing. The dog may come in if he wants to, but it must be with the understanding that it is at his own risk. It is said that dogs are intelligent. Some dogs are; but the dog that persists in hanging about an amateur carpenter isn't worth the leather it takes to make his collar.

The amateur carpenter always wants to make something without wasting any time. He is never content to go through with a course of experimental processes in wood. If he saws a board it is not to see how well or how straight he can learn to do it, but to make it fit into some mechanical creation of his fertile brain. If he drives a nail it is not to discover the mystery of doing it without splitting either of the surfaces which it joins, or how to keep it from staggering about like a lamp-post on a club night. He drives it, of course, to make the sides of a box stick on.

It is this insatiable constructive passion which gets the amateur carpenter into trouble. If he would be content with using his tools at first to find out how to use them, and afterwards to find out what to use them for, he would get along much better. But no; he must make something. He has an ideal in his head, and he immediately sets to work to carve it out in wood and nails.

By-and-bye, after a great deal of perspiring and muttered utterance, he gets the pieces, the constituent parts, of the thing blocked out; and here he takes a rest and contemplates his blistered palms with considerable self-satisfaction. It looks as though the chief difficulty has been conquered; all that remains to be done is to put the pieces together and the thing will be complete. But, alas for his short-lived confidence! The trials of the amateur carpenter have just begun.

When he buckles to work again, he is astonished to find that the constituent parts of his conception don't harmonise, as you may say, worth a halfpenny. One slants to the north, and the other to the south, one is bigger at the top, and the other at the bottom. Change them round, and it works just the other way, but for the life of him he can't make them so that they will come out even. He tries the sides, and they are four times as bad. One laps over the two ends about an inch each way, and the other one is about an inch too short.

Then the amateur carpenter pours out the vials of his wrath. With one mighty kick he sends the ingredients of his masterpiece flying across the room. The dog gets the piece that is full of half-driven nails just in that portion of his anatomy most vitally connected with his howling apparatus, and the chorus of epithets and yells that ascends from that small back chamber is something awful. To add to his boiling rage, the amateur has severely sprained and otherwise inconvenienced his two most efficient toes, from having forgotten the fact that he had his slippers on instead of his boots when his emotions got the better of him.

On the whole, his first effort cannot be set down as an unqualified success. Still, he does not wish to give up so easily, and, after hobbling about and kicking the dog three or four times with his well foot, to even things up, he sits down and tries to think of something simple to make.

How, for instance, would a doll-table for the little girl do? A square bit of board, with four holes at the four corners, and rounded sticks driven into them, would be the general plan of it. Simple enough, surely! He can do *that* without any trouble. So up he gets, selects his board, and proceeds to saw off the requisite portion of it. When about half-way through the board the saw sticks, and it will not move either way. The amateur carpenter tugs away for a few minutes, and then once again his choler begins to rise—not his paper-collar; that was up about his ears a good while ago. He jumps up on the bench, plants both feet on the board, grabs the saw-handle, and jerks backward with all his might.

The saw comes out with a rush, and the amateur carpenter swoops down off the bench, and plunges the back of his head into the nail-box. Fortunately his collar protects his scalp somewhat, and he escapes with a vision of two billion stars, and a long raw scratch on the neck.

The saw, however, is now out of the board, and a brilliant thought occurs to the amateur carpenter. He has heard that lard or tallow rubbed on a refractory saw will cause it to glide with the most charming smoothness through the tightest kind of board. So he goes and hunts up the servant, and persuades her to let him take the lard-pail. Armed with this he returns to his stronghold, and the dog—like a thick-headed ass—returns with him. The amateur carpenter besmears the saw for its entire length on both sides with lard an inch deep, and then goes for the board again.

The saw runs easier, but the lard covers up his guiding mark, and he works off on a sort of tangent. It will do, however, for such a rude and simple affair as a home-made doll-table. Now he must bore the holes in the four corners.

He selects a bit of about the right size, screws it into the bit-brace, puts his block over a hole in the bench, weighs it, and proceeds to bore. For a few moments the chips fly in a lively manner, then there is an ominous cracking sound, the bit goes through with a rush, and the amateur carpenter, unable to recover himself, comes down slap on the bench, knocking all the wind out of him, and giving himself a sanguinary nose by banging that member against the edge of the tool-chest.

This ends his recreation for the first day. With a howl of anguish and rage he darts from the room, holding his nose in his hand and yelling for a handkerchief. Finally, after his devoted wife has dropped half-a-dozen bunches of cold keys down his back and gone through the whole list of superstitious remedies for nose-bleed, he recovers, bathes, clothes himself, and returns to his right mind.

O. P. W.

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GORDON'S DAUGHTER.

HAD anyone suggested to Paul Gordon on his wedding-day, that it is when Fate gives us what we ask that we should beware of her, he would have scoffed at the idea. Had some cynical person gone further and insinuated that possibly five years of life with the sweet creature who stood beside him, looking so gracious and tender in her bridal robes, would change his eager confidence in life into bitter distrust, his resentment would probably have taken a more active form.

She was a charming bride, with her masses of shining brown hair, delicate features and slender grace, and Gordon felt very solemn and humble as he looked down upon her. His vision suddenly became indistinct, and no more fervent prayer ever went up from a full heart than ascended from his as he knelt at the chancel rail beside her, lifting his heart dumbly to his Maker.

In a sort of beautiful vision he saw their life together stretching away from the little West Newton church; going on and on like a long, sunny, peaceful road until it was lost in a happy blurr. With the inspiration of her presence forever beside him, he would live up to his best; he would achieve great things.

Matrimony shatters a good many illusions. Five years from his wedding-day, the genial, great-hearted Gordon was a disappointed, cynical man, whose attitude towards his wife was one of contemptuous toleration, though he was not without a certain appreciation of the humour of his destiny.

Sometimes in the solitude of his library he indulged in a hard, mirthless laugh, as he thought of the difference between his dreams and the reality.

He was a rising man in his profession—that part of his dreams, at least, had come true—but there was no heart-to-heart companion to share the delights of achievement with him—to spur him on when he was weary and disillusioned.

And yet he had married a girl whom any man might have been proud to win. It was the instance of the Ugling Duckling reversed! Helen Gordon was not only beautiful, but there was a certain ethereal quality about her beauty which touched the imagination. At a time when a college training for women was thought to be scarcely a desirable thing, she had been a teacher and paid her own way through college, as her father refused to listen to any such nonsense.

How Gordon had gloried in her intellect and energy. Other girls might be as fair as she, but where was there one who combined beauty, grace and intellect with so much womanly charm? In the days of their courtship they had planned to study together, and it never struck him that it was simply his enthusiasm which had carried her along—that the plans were more his than hers. She was to keep him in touch with literature, to keep him from growing one-sided mentally, as professional men are apt to do.

And, indeed, they had made a beginning, as a very respectable display of French and German books which lined the library shelves—to which Gordon's eyes sometimes turned with a bitter sneer — attested. Then imperceptibly some inherited languour of the little bride's, which had until then been dormant, began to assert itself. She never openly opposed his wishes, but there was always some excellent excuse for putting off the work they had planned to do together. The first year of their married life passed and Gordon began to realise that he was pursuing a will-o'-the-wisp—realised it with a dull pain, a deep, inward hurt which rankled the more that it was hidden beneath a calm manner.

He did not confide his plans to her now, for he had discovered that it only wearied her, though she listened to him in a patient, uncomplaining way. Then hope awakened once more in his heart. It would be all different when the baby came! He took all the blame for the sordid failure of their married life upon himself. He was a brute and he rated himself soundly for the irritation that had grown up in his breast against her.

The baby, of course, would be a boy. In the indomitable strength of his desire he never once doubted that—never admitted the possibility that it could be otherwise. He was happy once more and his imagination ran away with him. Long before the little stranger appeared, he had gone with him step by step through his babyhood, bought him a pony and taught him to ride, and shared all his boyish joys and sorrows. He even went further and fancied him a great lad to whom his heart went out with a mighty tenderness as he pointed out to him his own mistakes and tried to shield him from similar ones. And then came the stupefying intelligence that his boy was a girl!

At this new disappointment, a wild, unreasoning bitterness against mother and child surged through him. His heart-hunger was turned back upon itself once more. He was one of those pronounced masculine creatures to whom the society of his own sex is indispensable. He had had one desolating glimpse of how divine a thing the companionship of woman may be—one glimpse which had vanished and left him lonely for evermore. It was this great, aching emptiness in his life that the boy was to fill.

Wrath and repulsion filled his soul as he thought of the woman creature who could prove so alluring and so delusive!

"A girl!" he exclaimed bitterly. "What use have I for a girl! She will grow up and gossip and flirt and" —in the wild turmoil of his disappointment he said it aloud with brutal emphasis—"disappoint some other man as her mother has disappointed me!"

From that time, Gordon was a changed man. He devoted himself with restless ardour to his profession, treated his wife with open disdain and did not scruple

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to show his scorn for the pettiness of her interests. Her time was pretty evenly divided between shopping and watching the occupants of the opposite houses with a morbid curiosity about their goings and comings.

Poor little Mrs. Gordon! Through some fatal inheritance a sudden numbness fell upon her higher nature with marriage. As Mrs. Gordon, she felt that all reason for strenuousness was removed. The exquisite, soulful quality of her beauty gradually disappeared, leaving a pretty woman with a face whose plumpness was rapidly becoming fat, and whose calmness would soon be called phlegmatic.

Mindful of her vow to love, honour, and obey, she grew daily more punctilious about details as she neglected essentials. It was all nonsense now that they were married—that idea of Paul's about her studying! She would not, could not study and read, but she bore his taunts in silence, and, to do her justice, really thought him the finest man in the world, and was convinced that it was his right to be disagreeable to her if he chose.

She would not study German or keep up her music, but she never failed to see that his clothes were well looked after. She always ordered dinner with direct reference to his tastes and never complained if it was kept waiting until cold; though the cook usually made up for the forbearance of her mistress in this matter.

Her very humility increased his bitterness towards her. She was so willing to do everything for him—except the one thing that he cared for. Her mild, obtuse manner maddened him at times until he could have struck her. But being a gentleman, he said cutting things instead, which she heard in silence, and resented only by an occasional flush.

As the years went by, they saw less and less of each other. Gordon usually ate his meals in silence, and excused himself as soon as he had finished. But his wife never complained. There were times when he looked at her with the savage desire to rise and slay burning in his heart, she put him so deeply in the wrong. An observer, he knew, would have said: "What a brute of a man Gordon is, and what a sweet little wife he has!" There were grim lines about his mouth which marked the hours that he had spent musing upon the power of sweet little women to wreck a man's faith and hope.

No other child came to them, and the offending daughter flourished and expanded into a full-fledged young lady before he had ceased to regard her as an interloper. She had been kept out of his way as much as possible, and regarded him with a mixture of awe and pride, for middle-age had brought him an added brusqueness of manner and something very like fame in his profession: while it had returned to Mrs. Gordon in flesh whatever it had filched from her in spirit.

There was too much abstract justice in Gordon's make-up for him to ignore the fact that his behaviour to his family was outrageous. If his wife had stood up and resented it, he sometimes told himself—had shown some spirit, some independence, he would have respected her and might, in time, have become reconciled to his disappointment. But to his arrogant, outspoken nature, her humility was nauseating.

As for the child—she had grown up on the same plan, he supposed. How could he know that, though she loved her mother in a tender, protecting way, she worshipped her stern, forbidding father as one might worship a god—with fear and trembling? Didn't she always address him in a half-frightened manner, and was not her attitude a reflection of her mother's in every way? He smiled cynically as he pictured them, these two meek women, acting so absurdly as if they lived only by his gracious permission!

The son that he had dreamt of was like a dear, long lost child! Life had brought him fame and wealth—and only denied him his dearest wish. Why, then, should he complain?

Thus he argued with himself in bitter scorn—argued against the loneliness of a lifetime which, at fifty, was becoming tragic. He was growing weak—asinine, he told himself, but he could not strangle the longing for the affection of his own flesh and blood.

He sometimes lingered over dinner in these days indulging in awkward pleasantries while his wife and daughter grew flushed and pleased and a trifle nervous in their eagerness to show their appreciation of his attentions. Then he would be unusually churlish for days, from a queer shame at his own self-consciousness in their presence.

His daughter, he noticed, resembled him. It was the day after this fact fixed his attention that he invited her to go to the theatre with him. There was ripple of subdued excitement in the house at this which annoyed him almost beyond endurance. He would have liked them to act as if he had been a model father from her infancy upwards.

He was beginning to feel a shy interest in her, an interest which he was not yet ready to admit to himself and which it went against his pride to have them notice. After all, she was his child—his daughter. Once he repeated the words softly to himself, and a queer, happy thrill went through him.

And then, one day, just as he was beginning to understand that there might, after all, be some happiness left for him in the possession of this neglected daughter, just as he had begun to feel a new pleasure in existing, there was a rap at his door, and the maid announced "Mr. Langley." Gordon suddenly remembered to have seen him at the house often of late, and a quick presentiment shot through his mind.

He should not have her! All the fierce, impetuous will power of his youth leapt up in him at once. There was no possible objection to be made to this suitor, as he knew; but he would positively refuse his consent—so easy it is for a just man to become an autocrat at times!

So Mr. Langley was dismissed, and there followed a stormy interview with his wife, the storm being upon his side and the tears and submission on hers.

"She shall never marry him, and the sooner you tell her my wishes in the matter the better," he finished curtly, as he ended the interview and retired to the library.

Pauline was strangely quiet when her mother told her. She did not burst into tears, though for a moment her face grew very pale.

"Is my father in the library?" she asked in a low, cool voice which made her mother vaguely uneasy.

"Yes, dear," she fluttered, "but it's no use pleading with him. You know how decided he is. I have never gone against his wishes—" (she spoke in perfect good faith), "and of course he knows best."

The girl looked at her mother for a moment, and something very like pity flitted across her face.

"Don't worry, mamma," she said quietly; "I am going to plead with him," and she left the room without further remark.

A gruff "Come in" answered her rap at the library door. Her father was writing, and did not look up.

She waited patiently until the sharp, inquiring "Well?" signified that he was ready to listen to her. Her face flushed painfully at the contempt in his tones, and for the first time in her life she felt that things should not be thus between father and child. Before she could speak he addressed her peremptorily:

"I have nothing to add to what I have said to your mother. I suppose that is what you wish to see me about."

He sat back in his chair and looked at her with just a gleam of curiosity in his deep eyes. He was wondering what she would do; but of course she would retire submissively. The gleam deepened into real interest as she began to speak.

"Have you any real objection to Ralph—Mr. Langley's—character?" she asked, her voice gaining steadiness as she proceeded.

"None whatever," he replied, with bland conciseness. "I simply do not choose that he should marry my daughter."

And he turned to his desk as if the incident were closed.

"One moment!"

Her voice fairly rang out, and she seemed to grow taller as she spoke. All trace of timidity and embarrassment had vanished, and Gordon felt a queer tingling of the nerves as he watched her. Her blue eyes blazed into his with an expression as determined and indomitable as his own, but her voice was perfectly level, as she said:

"I have simply come to tell you that I shall marry whom I choose. That is a question that no human being has a right to decide for me, much less a father who has never in my life shown the slightest interest in me."

She did not move but stood looking at him with a steady, inflexible gaze in which he recognised—himself! There was no bravado in her manner, but there was something that stirred his heart as it had not been stirred for years. For a long moment they looked at each other; then the girl's lip quivered. But it was with wounded affection, not fear. For the life of him her father could not have spoken. He rose, and, with a profound bow, opened the door and held it for her to pass out.

When it was closed once more, and he was safe in the solitude of the library, an exultant smile rested on his lips.

"She has some spirit!" he murmured, half-aloud; "some pluck!" Then, after a reminiscent pause: "Why, it's almost as interesting as having a boy to deal with. Why hasn't she shown that side of her character before?" With fine inconsistency he forgot that he had never given her an opportunity.

Meantime, trembling from the reaction of her revolt, his daughter had gone to her room. She laughed hysterically as she pictured her mother's consternation at what she had done.

From what she knew of her father's character, she felt sure that the rupture was final. He would never forgive her, and she would never retract! She, too, was a Gordon! At least, there would be one more dinner in this strange home of hers—and she laughed a little bitterly and began to dress.

Her father's eyes sought hers with a satirical light in their depths as she entered the dining-room that night, but hers leapt to meet them unflinchingly. She never knew that had they avoided his by so much as a hair's-breadth, she would have lost what came to be to her in after years one of the great joys of her life—her father's loving companionship.

So she did not repent! There was a wild, triumphant joy in Gordon's heart, for he had feared that she might—that at dinner she would appear as a suppliant for his forgiveness. Here at last was a foeman worthy of his steel!

He greeted her with exaggerated politeness and held a slip of paper towards her. She took it wonderingly, looked at it for a moment, then at him, in bewilderment. It was a cheque for a hundred pounds!

"Since you are going to marry when and whom you please," he explained suavely, "it seems well that you should have a little extra money."

His tone was mocking, but by some subtle instinct, Pauline knew that she had pleased him better than she had ever done in her life before.

"Papa!" she exclaimed in a doubtful, questioning tone—"Papa!"—and then her eyes looked wistfully but fearlessly into his, and something of his nature was revealed to her—she understood! With a quick, impetuous movement she was at his side and her arms were round his neck.

Frances Wilson.

IT IS ALWAYS INTERESTING

to know other people's opinion of yourself, especially when that opinion is absolutely unbiassed.

If you want to know what sort of a person you are send a specimen of your handwriting to

RANEE, 32 Pearson's Buildings, Henrietta Street, London, W.C.,

inclosing six penny stamps and a stamped addressed envelope.

RESULT OF THE "FACE-MAKING" COMPETITION.

The prize of £1 1s. has been awarded Mr. J. Allan, of 12 Sidney Street, Glasgow, who made 792 faces altogether. A six-shilling novel has been sent to each of the following:

Mrs. J. Allan, 80 Finlay Drive, Glasgow (762); Miss K. Brock Botley, Hants (529); H. L. Pickering, 35 Ashness Road, Clapham Common (506); H. Allan, 458 Gallowgate, Glasgow (489); W. Hurley, 47 Chesholme Road, Stoke Newington, N. (482); Miss Fell, Redcot, Seaton, South Devon (463); F. Martin, Woodford Bridge, Chigwell (462); Miss H. Brown, 3 Theresa St., Blaydon-on-Tyne (440); T. Guthrie, 11 Carfin St., Govanhall, Glasgow (416); E. Fisher, 63 Bold St., Altrincham (409); J. Brandon, 29 Millman St., W.C. (406); E. W. Brand, 37 Osborne Road, Stroud Green (404); D. A. Berrie, 31 Danes Drive, Scotstown, Renfrewshire (396); W. C. Davey, jun., 3 Albert Road, Dalston (355); V. Frankenstein, 19 Tenter St., Spitalfields (343); F. M. Beck, 87 Woodstock Road, Finsbury Park, N. (331); Miss L. Jones, Loose, near Maidstone (328); Mrs. A. Chandler, 6 Upper George St., Kingstown (327); W. Tapley, 22 Leicester Road, Loughborough (327); V. McKirdy Brown, 3 Reedville, Claughton, Birkenhead (323); Miss M. Cooper, 11 Alder St., Seaforth, Liverpool (310); W. James Brown, 17 Lodge Road, Hockley, Birmingham (307); Miss T. Berry, North Lodge, Addiscombe, Croydon (306); J. Baxter, 72 Premier St., Everton, Liverpool (304); W. Atherley, 10 Park Road, Liverpool (303).

Several competitors gave numbers greater than those of the above, but their faces were quite unrecognisable.

IN CONFIDENCE.

Conducted by MADGE MORRIS.

[*I shall be glad to answer, to the best of my ability, any letters from readers dealing with affairs of the heart, tangles in domestic life, or points of etiquette. All communications must be addressed to me personally, c/o the Editor of* SHORT STORIES.—MADGE MORRIS.]

"Three old Maids" are tired of single blessedness and write to ask whether they are too old to get married. They have a snug little sum of money between them, and, as the eldest is only thirty-six, they feel there ought to be a chance for them yet. Certainly, you should not give up hope, any of you; a woman is very often in her prime at thirty-six, and, in my opinion, people who marry late in life are often far happier than those who rush red hot into family cares when they are too young to understand their responsibilities.

"Baden" is nineteen and in love. He does not want to marry till he is two or three and twenty, but his friends are warning him about long courtships. Should he marry now?———Certainly you should wait. Do not mind what other people tell you. Long courtships are more often good than evil, as they enable a young couple to put their love to the test of time, and whether the result is a breaking off or marriage, the long courtship will have proved good. If the pair break it off, through tiring of each other, or seeing unsuspected faults, then is it not better that they should find it out before tying themselves together for life? And if you do marry at the end of the time, your long devotion to each other will prove that yours was an ideal love match.

"Madge."—I very much sympathise with you, but I fear the fact that he visits the other girl so constantly, and is so reserved about it, rather suggests that his affection for you has waned. One can generally tell this when told that anyone's love for you is "just the same." Those words have an ominous ring, and generally mean that while he still thinks you are a most charming and attractive girl, there is somebody else who—well, whom he is *in love* with. I should advise you to take no further steps in the matter, beyond telling him that while he continues these visits, all must be regarded as over between you. If he really loves you, that will soon bring him to his senses, and if, after all, he is merely flirting with the other girl, as is very likely the case, he will soon drop it.

You tell me, "Anxious One," you were introduced to a young man at a bazaar, and went out with him several times, and then you found that he was going out with other young women as well. You said you would have nothing more to do with him if he was going to treat you like that. He now makes mischief with everyone you go out with. You ask if I consider it a right spirit for any young man to have. No; I think he must be a very mean, despicable young man. You were quite right to give him up. Your letters are no trouble; write as often as you like. I am only too pleased to be able to help you.

"Nom de Plume."—I do not understand from your letter whether the lady said she was fond of the other man or not. If so, I should advise you to be firm, and to let her see that you will not allow any further communication between them if she is to be your wife. If you were a young man, I should advise you against marrying a woman who received attentions from a married man, but as you are a widower advanced in years, and she is a widow, things may be looked at in a more practical light, and as you are fond of her and know she will make a good wife, I should just come to a good understanding with her about the other man, and get her to definitely renounce him.

You say, "Tyro," that you are soon to meet the young lady for the first time, having as yet only known each other by sight, and you want to know how to conduct yourself.———I should begin by saying how long you have been wishing to meet her, and how strange it is that those you are most anxious to know seem the farthest off. You should say this in a nice tender way, without any formality. As she is a schoolmistress, you won't find it so difficult to talk and interest her. She must be educated and well read, and be more or less interested in her work. There you have a chance of winning her appreciation by talking about books and her experiences. Do not appear embarrassed, but be quite natural. School-mistresses are sensible girls and hate nonsense. They like a man to be himself. You say she cycles. Well, find out which roads she likes best, and make it your business to be pretty often on them yourself. Also, why not ask her to come for a ride? A man has more chance of showing attention to a girl on a cycle ride than elsewhere. Besides, the charm of the country after her confinement in a schoolroom will put her in just the right sort of mood for your purpose. Above all, be sure you are really fond of her before going too far.

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THE LOVERS OF YVONNE

By RAFAEL SABATINI.

CHAPTER XXI.

Of the Bargain that St. Auban Drove with My Lord Cardinal.

FROM the wounded man's bedside I wended my steps back to the Rue St. Antoine, resolved to start for Blois that very night; and beside me walked Montrésor, with bent head, like a man deep in thought.

At my door I paused to take my leave of the lieutenant, for I was in haste to have my preparations made and to be gone. But Montrésor appeared not minded to be dismissed thus easily.

"What plan have you formed?" he asked.

"The only one there is to form—to set out for Canaples at once."

"Hum!" he grunted, and again was silent. Then suddenly throwing back his head, "By Heaven!" he cried, "I care not what comes of it, I'll tell you what I know. Lead the way to your chamber, M. de Luynes, and delay your departure until you have heard me."

Surprised as much by his words as by the tones in which he uttered them, which was that of a man who is angry with himself, I passively did as I was bidden.

Once within my little ante-chamber, he turned the key with his own hands, and pointing to the door of my bedroom—

"In there, Monsieur," quoth he, "we shall be safe from listeners."

Deeper grew my astonishment at all this mystery as we passed into the room beyond.

"Now, M. de Luynes," he cried, flinging down his hat, "for no apparent reason I am about to commit treason. I am about to betray the hand that pays me."

"If no reason exists, why do so evil a deed?" I inquired calmly. "I have learnt during our association to wish you well, Montrésor; if by telling me that which your tongue burns to tell, you shall have cause for shame, the door is yonder. Go before harm is done, and leave me alone to fight my battle out."

He stood up, and for a moment he seemed to waver; then dismissing his doubts with an abrupt gesture, he sat down again.

"There is no wrong in what I do. Right is with you, M. de Luynes, and if I break faith with the might I serve, it is because that might is an unjust one; I do but betray the false to the true, and there can be little shame in such an act. Moreover, I have a reason—but let that be."

He was silent for a moment then he resumed—

"Most of that which you have learnt from Malpertuis to-night I myself could have told you. Yes, St. Auban has carried Canaples' letter to the Cardinal already. I heard from his lips to-day, for I was present at the interview, how the document had been wrested from Malpertuis. For your sake, so that you might learn all he knew, I sought the fellow out, and having found him in the Rue des Tournelles, I took you thither."

In a very fever of excitement I listened.

"To take up the thread of the story where Malpertuis left off, let me tell you that St. Auban sought an audience with Mazarin this morning, and by virtue of a note which he desired an usher to deliver to his Eminence, he was admitted, the first of all the clients that for hours had thronged the ante-room. As in the instance of the audience to Eugène de Canaples, so upon this occasion did it chance that the Cardinal's fears touching St. Auban's purpose had been aroused, for he bade me stand behind the curtains in his cabinet.

"The Marquis spoke bluntly enough, and with rude candour he stated that since Mazarin had failed to bring the Canaples estates into his family by marriage, he came to set before his Eminence a proof so utter of Canaples' treason that it would enable him to snatch the estates by confiscation. The Cardinal may have been staggered by St. Auban's bluntness, but his avaricious instincts led him to stifle his feelings, and bid the Marquis to set this proof before him. But St. Auban had a bargain to drive—a preposterous one, methought. He demanded that in return for his delivering into the hands of Mazarin the person of Armand de Canaples together with an incontestable proof that the Chevalier was in league with the *Frondeurs*, and had offered to place a large sum of money at their disposal, he was to receive as recompense the demesne of Canaples on the outskirts of Blois together with one-third of the confiscated estates. At first Mazarin gasped at his audacity, then laughed at him, whereupon St. Auban politely craved his Eminence's permission to withdraw. This the Cardinal however refused him, and bidding him remain, he sought to bargain with him. But the Marquis replied that he was unversed in the ways of trade and barter, and that he had no mind to enter into them. From bargaining the Cardinal passed on to threatening, and from threatening to whining and so on until in the end, St. Auban preserving a firm demeanour, the comedy was played out and Mazarin fell in with his proposals and terms."

"Good Heavens!" I cried. "And has St. Auban set out?"

"He starts to-morrow and I go with him. When finally the Cardinal had consented, the Marquis demanded and obtained from him a promise in writing, signed and sealed by Mazarin, that he should receive a third of the Canaples estates and the demesne on the outskirts of Blois in exchange for the body of Armand de Canaples, dead or alive, and a proof of treason sufficient to warrant his arrest and the confiscation of his estates. Next, seeing in what regard the Seigneur is held by the people of Blois, and fearing that his arrest might be opposed by many of his adherents, the Marquis has demanded

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a troop of twenty men. This Mazarin has also granted him; intrusting the command of the troop to me, under St. Auban. Further, the Marquis has stipulated that the greatest secrecy is to be observed, and has expressed his purpose of going upon this enterprise *disguised and masked*; for, as he rightly opines, when months hence he enters into possession of the demesne of Canaples in the character of purchaser, did the Bloisois recognise in him the man who sold the Chevalier, his life would stand in hourly peril."

I heard him through patiently enough; yet, when he stopped, my pent-up feelings burst all bonds, and I resolved there and then to go in quest of that Judas, St. Auban, and made an end of his plotting for all time. But Montrésor restrained me, showing me how futile such a course must prove, and how I risked losing all chance of aiding those at Canaples.

He was right. First I must warn the Chevalier; afterwards I would deal with St. Auban.

Someone knocked at that moment, and with the entrance of Michelot my talk with Montrésor came perforce to an end. For Michelot brought me the news that for days I had been waiting—Madame de Chevreuse had returned to Paris at last.

But for Montrésor's remonstrances it is likely that I should have set out forthwith to wait upon her. I permitted myself, however, to be persuaded that the lateness of the hour would render my visit unwelcome, and so I determined in the end, albeit grudgingly, to put off my departure for Blois until the morrow.

Noon had but struck from Notre Dame next day as I mounted the steps of the Hotel de Luynes. My swagger and that brave suit of pearl-grey velvet with its silver lace bore me unchallenged past the gorgeous Swiss who stood majestic in the doorway. But for the first mincing lackey I chanced upon, more was needed to gain me an audience. And so, as I did not choose to speak my name, I drew a ring from my finger, and bade him bear it to the Duchess.

He obeyed me in this, and presently returning, he bowed low and begged of me to follow him; for, as I had thought, albeit Madame de Chevreuse might not know to whom that ring belonged, yet the arms of Luynes carved upon the stone had sufficed to insure an interview.

I was ushered into a pretty boudoir, hung in blue and gold, which overlooked the garden, and wherein, reclining upon a couch, with a book of Bois-Robert's verses in her white and slender hand, I found my beautiful aunt.

Of this famous lady who was the cherished friend and more than sister of Anne of Austria, much has been written—much that is good, and more, far more, that is ill; for those who have a queen for friend shall never lack for enemies. But those who have praised and those who have censured have at least been at one touching her marvellous beauty. At the time whereof I write, it is not possible that she could be less than forty-six, and yet her figure was slender and shapely, and still endowed with the grace of girlhood; her face delicate of tint, and little marked by time, or even by the sufferings to which, in the late king's reign, Cardinal de Richelieu had subjected her; her eyes were blue and peaceful as a summer sky; her hair was the colour of ripe corn. He would be a hardy guesser who set her age at so much as thirty.

My appearance she greeted by letting fall her book, and lifting up her hands—the loveliest in France—she uttered a little cry of surprise.

"Is it really you, Gaston?" she asked. Albeit it was growing wearisome to be thus greeted by all to whom I showed myself, yet I studied courtesy in my reply, and then, 'neath the suasion of her kindliness, I related all that had befallen me since first I had journeyed to Blois in Andrea de Mancini's company, withholding, however, all allusions to my feelings towards Yvonne. Why betray them, when they

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were doomed to be stifled in the breast that begat them? But Madame de Chevreuse had not been born a woman and lived six and forty years to no purpose.

"And this maid with as many suitors as Penelope, is she very beautiful?" she inquired slyly.

"France does not hold her equal!" I answered, falling like a simpleton into the trap she had set me.

"This to me?" quoth she archly. "Oh, fie, Gaston! Your evil ways have taught you as little gallantry as dissimulation." And her merry ripple of laughter showed me how in six words I had betrayed that which I had been at such pains to hide.

But before I could, by protestations, plunge deeper than I stood already, the Duchess turned the conversation adroitly to the matter of the letter of hers wherein she had bidden me wait upon her.

A cousin of mine, one Marion de Luynes, who like myself had, through the evil of his ways, become an outcast from his family, was lately dead. Unlike me, however, he was no adventurous soldier of fortune, but a man of peace, with an estate in Provence that had a rent-roll of five thousand livres a year. On his deathbed he had cast about him for an heir, unwilling that his estates should swell the fortunes of the family that in life had disowned him. Into his ear some kindly angel had whispered my name, and the memory that I had shared with him the frown of our house, and that my plight must be passing pitiful, had set up a bond of sympathy between us which had led him to will his lands to me. Of Madame de Chevreuse, who clearly was the patron saint of those of her first husband's nephews who chanced to tread ungodly ways, my cousin Marion had besought that she should see to the fulfilment of his last wishes.

My brain reeled beneath the first shock of that unlooked-for news. Already I saw myself transformed from a needy adventurer into a gentleman of fortune, and methought my road to Yvonne lay open, all obstacles removed. But swiftly there followed the thought of my own position; and truly it seemed that a cruel irony lay in the matter wherein things had fallen out, since did I declare myself to be alive, and claim the Provence estates, the Cardinal's claws would be quick to seize me.

Thus much I told Madame de Chevreuse; but her answer cheered me, and said much for my late cousin's prudence.

"Nay," she cried. "Marion was ever shrewd. Knowing that men who live by the sword, as you have lived, are often wont to die by the sword, and that suddenly at times, he has made provision that in the event of your being dead his estates shall come to me, who have been the most indulgent of his relatives. This, my dear Gaston, has already taken place, for we believed you dead; and therein fortune has been kind to you, for now, while receiving the revenues of your lands, which the world will look upon as mine, I shall contrive that they reach you wherever you may be, until such a time as you may elect to come to life again."

Now, but for the respect in which I held her, I could have taken the pretty Duchess in my arms and kissed her.

Restraining myself, however, I contented myself by kissing her hand, and told her of the journey I was going, then craved another boon of her. No matter what the issue of that journey, and whether I went alone or accompanied, I was determined to quit France and repair to Spain. There I would abide until the Parliament, the Court, or the knife of some chance assassin, or even nature herself, should strip Mazarin of his power.

Now at the Court of Spain it was well-known that my aunt's influence was vast, and so the boon I craved was that she should aid me to a position in the Spanish service that would allow me during my exile to find occupation and perchance renown. To this my aunt most graciously acceded; and when at length I took my leave, with such gratitude in my heart that what words I could think of seemed but clumsily to express it, I bore in the breast of my doublet a letter to Don Juan de Cordova, a noble of great prominence at the Spanish Court, and in the pocket of my knickerbockers a purse of two hundred gold pistoles, as welcome as they were heavy.

CHAPTER XXII.

Of my Second Journey to Canaples.

An hour after I quitted the Hotel de Luynes, Michelot and I left Paris by the barrier St. Michel and took the Orleans road. How different it looked in the bright June sunshine from the picture which it had presented to our eyes on that February evening, four months ago, when last we had set out upon that same journey!

Not only in nature had a change been wrought, but in my very self. My journey then had been aimless, and I had scarcely known whither I was bound nor had I fostered any great concern thereon. Now I rode in hot haste, with a determined purpose, a man of altered fortunes and altered character.

Into Choisy we clattered at a brisk pace, but at the sight of the inn of the *Connetable* such memories surged up, that I was forced to draw rein and call for a cup of Anjou, which I drank in the saddle. Thereafter we rode without interruption through Longjumeau, Arpajon, and Etrechy, and so well did we use our horses that as night fell we reached Etampes.

From inquiries that Michelot had made on the road we learnt that no troop such as that which rode with St. Auban had lately passed that way, so that 'twas clear we were in front of them.

But scarce had we finished supper in the little room which I had hired at the *Gros Paon*, when, from below, a stamping of hoofs, the jangle of arms, and the shouts of many men told me that we were overtaken.

Clearly I did not burn with a desire to linger; but, rather it seemed to me, that although night had closed in, black and moonless, we must set out again, and push on to Monnerville, albeit our beasts were worn, and the distance a good three leagues.

With due precaution we effected our departure, and there after had a spur been needed to speed us on our way, that spur we had in the knowledge that St. Auban came close upon our heels. At Monnerville we slept, and next morning we were early afoot; by four o'clock in the afternoon we had reached Orleans, whence, with fresh horses, we pursued our journey as far as Meung, where we lay that night.

There we were joined by a sturdy rascal whom Michelot enlisted into my service, seeing that not only did my means allow, but the enterprise upon which I went might perchance demand another body-servant. This recruit was a swart, powerfully-built man, of about my own age; trusty, and a lover of hard knocks, as Michelot, who had long counted him among his friends, assured me. He owned the euphonious name of Abdon.

I spent twenty pistoles in suitable raiment and a horse for him, and as we left Meung next day the knave cut a brave enough figure, that added not a little to my importance to have at my heels.

This, however, so retarded our departure, that night had fallen by the time we reached Blois. Still our journey had been a passing swift one. We had left Paris on a Monday the fourth of June—I have good cause to remember, since on that day I entered both upon my thirty-second year and my altered fortunes. On the evening of Wednesday we reached Blois, having covered a distance of forty-three leagues in less than three days.

Bidding Michelot carry my valise to the hostelry of the *Vigne d'Or*, and there await my coming, I called to Abdon to attend me, and rode on, jaded and travel-stained though I was, to Canaples, realising fully that there was no time to lose.

Old Guilbert, who came in answer to my knock at the door of the Château, looked askance when he beheld me; and when I bade him carry my compliments to the Chevalier, with the message that I desired immediate speech of him on a matter of the gravest moment, he shook his grey head and protested that it would be futile to obey me. Yet in the end, when I had insisted, he went upon my errand, but only to return with a disturbed countenance, to tell me that the Chevalier refused to see me.

"But I must speak to him, Guilbert," I exclaimed, setting

foot upon the top step. "I have travelled expressly from Paris."

The man stood firm and again shook his head.

"I beseech you not to insist, Monsieur; M. le Chevalier has sworn to dismiss me if I permit you to set foot within the Château."

"Good Heavens! This is madness! I seek to serve him," I cried, my temper rising fast. "At least, Guilbert, will you tell Mademoiselle that I am here, and that I——"

"I may carry no more messages for you, Monsieur," he broke in. "Listen! There is M. le Chevalier."

In reality I could hear the old knight's voice, loud and shrill with anger; and a moment later, Louis, his manservant, came across the hall.

"Guilbert," he commanded harshly, "close the door; the night air is keen."

My cheeks aflame with anger, I still made one last attempt to gain an audience.

"Master Louis," I exclaimed, "will you do me the favour to tell M. de Canaples——?"

"You are wasting time, Monsieur," he interrupted. "M. de Canaples will not see you. He bids you close the door, Guilbert."

"By Heaven! He shall see me!"

"The door, Guilbert!"

I took a step forward, but before I could gain the threshold the door was slammed in my face; and as I stood there, quivering with anger and disappointment, I heard the bolts being shot within.

I turned with an oath.

"Come, Abdon," I growled, as I climbed once more into the saddle. "let us leave the fool to the fate he has chosen."

CHAPTER XXIII.

Of how St. Auban Came to Blois.

In silence we rode back to Blois. Not that I lacked matter for conversation. Anger and chagrin at the thought that I had come upon this journey to earn naught but an insult and to have a door slammed in my face made my gorge rise until it went near to choking me. I longed to revile Canaples aloud; but Abdon's was not the ear into which I might pour the hot words that welled up to my lips.

Yet, if silent, the curses that I heaped upon the Chevalier's crassness were none the less fervent, and to myself I thought with grim relish of how soon and how dearly he would pay for the affront he had put upon me.

That satisfaction, however, endured not long; for presently I bethought me of how heavily the punishment would fall upon Yvonne, and yet of how she would be left to the mercy of St. Auban, whom the warrant from Mazarin would invest with almost any and every power at Canaples.

I ground my teeth at the sudden thought, and for a moment I was on the point of going back and forcing my way into the Château, at the sword point if necessary, to warn and save the Chevalier in spite of himself, and unthanked.

It was not in such a fashion that I had thought to see my mission to Canaples accomplished; I had dreamt of gratitude, and gratitude unbars the door to much. Nevertheless, whether or not I earned it, I must return and succeed where, for want of insistence, I had failed a while ago.

Of a certainty I should have acted thus, but that at the very moment upon which I formed the resolution Abdon drew my attention to a dark shadow by the roadside, not twenty paces in front of us. This proved to be the motionless figure of a horseman.

So soon as I was assured of it, I reined in my horse, and taking a pistol from the holster I levelled it at the shadow, accompanying the act with a sonorous, "Who goes there?"

The shadow stirred, and Michelot's voice answered me:

"'Tis I, Monsieur. They have arrived. I came to warn you."

"Who have arrived?" I shouted.

"The soldiers. They are lodged at the *Lys de France*."

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A medical authority has recently advanced a very strange theory. It is that persons who suffer from rheumatism, neuralgia, and gout, are saved thereby from catching common illnesses. The acid in the blood which causes these ailments prevents the development of other diseases. However this may be we imagine that sufferers from rheumatism would be glad to get rid of it and would take the risk of contracting other illnesses. Chas. Forde's Bile Beans for Biliousness are an unfailing cure for neuralgia and rheumatism and a proof of their efficacy against the latter ailment is proved by the case of Mr. John Griffiths, the Steward of the Oswestry Conservative Club. He says:—"Three years ago I contracted typhoid fever. For six long months I was as weak as a child. After that I gradually began to recover strength, but only very slowly, and I found that the disease has left me with rheumatism in its most acute form. My legs and feet became so stiff that it amounted to absolute torture to walk about. My back was weak also, and what with the weakness and rheumatism I began to think seriously that I should have to retire from active life altogether.

"All this time I was being regularly attended by my doctor, but he did not seem to be able to pull me together again. My brother, who lives in Middleton-in-Teesdale, sent me a box of Charles Forde's Bile Beans, and I tried them as I had done other medicines. But they proved widely different. By the time the first box was done I found to my great pleasure that they had given me considerable relief. The pains and the stiffness were not nearly so severe. I got a second box, and the good I had reaped was still further increased. I persevered with them, and, to cut a long story of gradual yet effective recovery short, after taking four boxes I was completely freed from rheumatism. What is better still, it has gone for good.

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ONE PENNY.

An oath was the only comment I made as I turned the news over in my mind. I must return to Canaples.

Then another thought occurred to me. The Chevalier was capable of going to extremes to keep me from entering his house; he might, for instance, greet me with a blunderbuss. It was not the fear of that which deterred me, but the fear that did a charge of lead get mixed with my poor brains before I had said what I went to say, matters would be no better and there would be one poor knave the less to adorn the world.

"What shall we do, Michelot?" I groaned, appealing in my despair to my henchman.

"Might it not be well to seek speech with M. de Montrésor?" quoth he.

I shrugged my shoulders. Nevertheless, after a moment's deliberation, I determined to make an attempt. If I succeeded, something might come of it.

And so I pushed on to Blois, with my knaves close at my heels.

Up the Rue Vieille we proceeded with caution, for the hostelry of the *Vigne d'Or*, where Michelot had hired me a room, fortunately overlooking the street, fronted the *Lys de France*, where St. Auban and his men were housed.

I gained that room of mine without mishap, and my first action was to deal summarily with a fat and well-roasted capon which the landlord set before us, for an empty stomach is a poor comrade in a desperate situation. That meal, washed down with the best part of a bottle of red Anjou, did much to restore me alike in body and in mind.

From my open window I gazed across the street at the *Lys de France*. The door of the common room, opening upon the street, was set wide, and across the threshold came a flood of light, in which there flitted the black figures of maybe a dozen amazed rustics, drawn thither for all the world as bats are drawn to a glare.

And there they hovered, with open mouths and stupid eyes, harkening to the din of voices that floated out on the tranquil air, the snatches of ribald songs, the raucous bursts of laughter, the clink of glasses, the clank of steel, the rattle of dice, and the strange soldier oaths that fell with every throw, and which to them must have sounded almost as words of some foreign tongue.

While I stood by my window, the landlord entered my room, and, coming up to me. "Thank heaven they are not housed at the *Vigne d'Or*," he said. "It will take Maître Bernard a week to rid his house of the stench of leather. They are part of a stray company that is on its way to fight the Spaniards," he informed me; "but methinks they will be forced to spend two or three days at Blois. Their horses are sadly jaded, and will need that rest before they can take the road again, thanks to the pace at which their boy of an officer must have led them. There is a gentleman with them who wears a mask. 'Tis whispered that he is a prince of the blood, who has made a vow not to uncover his face until this war be ended, in expiation of some sin committed in mad Paris."

I heard him in silence, and when he had done, I thanked him for his information. So, this was the story that the crafty St. Auban had spread abroad to lull suspicion touching the real nature of their presence, until their horses should be fit to undertake the return journey to Paris, or until he should have secured the person of M. de Canaples.

(To be continued.)

A Book Worth Reading.

An interesting historical novel has just been written by Mr. George C. Wallis (an old contributor to *Short Stories*), under the title "The Children of the Sphinx." The hero is a son of Rameses, King of Egypt, who goes through a number of startling adventures in Egypt, Syria, and on the Great Sea. It is a stirring story, and is well worth the six shillings asked for it

Long, Indeed!

Bessie: "He was very impudent. He put his arm round me twice." Jessie: "My! What a long arm he must have!"

To Keep the Orders.

Widower (to son): "I don't like that girl you want to marry, Charlie." Son: "I'm glad to hear it, guv'nor. Now I know I haven't any cause to be jealous."

How to Do It.

Flora (who has aspirations): "Don't you think women can do a great deal to elevate the stage?" Ted: "It wouldn't be necessary if they'd lower their hats."

An Heirloom.

Brace: "Among my dearest treasures is the watch my father carried when he was a young man." Bagley: "Would you mind letting me see it?" Brace: "Certainly not, but it is temporarily in the possession of my —er—father's brother."

Selfish Papa.

Little Nell: "I don't like my papa one bit. He's awful selfish." Mamma: "Is he?" Little Nell: "Yes. He nearly sat down on my dollie, an' then, instead of takin' another chair, he took her chair right away from her, an' left her on the hard floor."

Her First Chance.

He (accepted): "You say you were never engaged before?" She: "Yes." He: "How does that happen? I thought all women usually had three or four engagements." She (guilelessly): "Well, I presume I shall, too. You see, this is the first chance I've had."

Never Se n the Carrots.

A young married lady was explaining the difference between silver and electro to a small domestic, and said: "Mary, you will always find a 'lion' on anything that is real silver." "Yes, mum," said Mary, "I'll remember, and I've heard say as there is always carrots on gold, though I ain't seen them."

Making Orders Sure.

Junior Partner: "Well, I think" (puff) "I'll go out in the trade and see if I can get a few orders (puff, puff). Senior Partner: "That's right. Don't fail to take along some of those cigars you smoke and offer them to people." Junior Partner: "What for?" Senior Partner: "So the buyers will die before they have time to cancel the orders."

Getting Full Directions.

"Now be careful how you drive, cabby, and go slowly over the stones, for I hate to be shaken. And mind you pull up at the right house, and look out for those dreadful railway vans," said the nervous old gentleman. "Never fear, sir," said cabby, "I'll do my best. And which orsepital would you like to go to in case of an accident."

We Have Seen It.

The flannel shirt is a great institution. When it is brought home the proud husband and father dons it and goes forth to defy the sweltering heat of a July day. The next week it is washed, and then it is just about the size for the twelve-year-old son. Another week rolls round and it is a perfect fit for the baby. The fourth week it descends to Betsy's doll, and the fifth week it vanishes altogether—disappears mysteriously. It was seen to go into the wash-tub, but that was the last of it. It never came out. It had shrunk away to nothing.

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The Best & Safest Remedy for

HEADACHE.

NURSE HILL, of the London Association of Nurses, writes:

"I have seen Kaputine administered to many patients, and can truly say it is a remedy which should have a place in every household."

All Leading Chemists sell KAPUTINE, 1/-. Samples One Penny.

If your Chemist has not KAPUTINE send his name and address to C.G. KAPUTINE, HUDDERSFIELD and we will send you SAMPLES. FREE.

WORTH A CROWN A DOSE.

Lest you're Misled!

In every advertisement of Borax Dry Soap for years past has appeared a facsimile of the original and only genuine packet.
Our purpose has been to familiarize you with the appearance of the packet, and safeguard you against the imitations that are sometimes met with—imitations which are put up by those who, incited by greed of its success, endeavour to nibble a portion of the trade on the reputation and guarantee of quality the title Borax Dry Soap implies.
There is only one genuine

BORAX DRY SOAP.

It is the best washing powder money can buy, and is put up in packets printed like facsimile shown here. Don't have any substitute or imitation foisted upon you. Disappointment will inevitably result if you accept such.
Borax Dry Soap is sold in ¼lb. packets—same price as the other kinds—by Grocers and Oilmen everywhere. Write to-day for free trial sample, naming *Short Stories*.

By Special Appointment — Makers to the King.

The Patent Borax Co. Ltd., Birmingham.

AN END TO SKIN TROUBLES.

READ THIS LETTER

From a sufferer who has been cured by "ANTEXEMA," written entirely of his own part, out of gratitude for a happy release from suffering. Mr. Robert Dawson, of 89 Albert Street, Gateshead-on-Tyne, writes:

"I received your sample bottle of 'ANTEXEMA,' for which I do not know how to thank you. After suffering untold torture for three weeks, the first dressing that I put on relieved all the burning—which was like someone burning with a hot iron—and I had what I had not been used to, a good night's rest. After the sample bottle was used, I got a 1/1½ bottle, and thank God it is now cured. If ever there was a genuine article advertised for the benefit of the public—'ANTEXEMA' is one—and worth five times what you charge for it."

This letter is one of many like it, which we have on file, and can be seen at any time. If you are a sufferer from *any form of skin trouble*, write for a free trial sample of

"ANTEXEMA"

sent post-paid by return, together with valuable treatise on the skin, in plain wrapper, or get a bottle from your chemist, price 1/1½ and 2/9. Refuse injurious substitutes. The Antexema Co., 83 Castle Road, London, N.W.

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can safely **Reduce Weight and cure Corpulency permanently** by taking **TRILENE TABLETS** (Regd.) for a few weeks. They are small, agreeable, harmless, and never fail to IMPROVE both HEALTH and FIGURE without Change of Diet. An English Countess writes: "*Your Trilene Tablets act admirably.*"

Send 2s. 6d. to **THE TRILENE CO.**, Sole Proprietors **66 Finsbury Pavement, London.**

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Princess Liechtenstein writes from Landsberg, Austria: "Pray send your excellent tablets directly." Mr. Canham, 67 Alexandra Road, Norwich: "Tablets cured my wife of extreme stoutness; it has never returned." Mrs. H. Cox, 28 Watmall Road, Hucknall Torkard, writes: "The Tablets reduced me 1½ stone." Mrs. S. Alexander, 102 Dixon Street, New Swindon, says: "They reduced me 28lb., and I am cured." Mrs. Darnley-Smith, of Landscove Vicarage, Ashburton, says: "Tablets have reduced me very much." Mrs. Crossley, of Rose Hill, Torver, Comston, says: "I weigh much less and can breathe so much easier; I am delighted."

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100 years worldwide use proves them the BEST FAMILY MEDICINE
Of all Chemists 1/1½, 2/9 & 4/6 per box

WHY THIS FALSE SHAME?

"TELL me of what you are ashamed, and I will tell you what you are." There are some things of which one ought to be ashamed, whilst there are others of which one should be ashamed of being ashamed. False shame is a robber. It takes from us our pleasures, joys, and rightful inheritances, and gives us nothing in return. Is a woman ashamed of desiring beauty or a man of acquiring strength? According to the publishers of Professor Boyd Laynard's great work, "SECRETS OF BEAUTY, HEALTH, AND LONG LIFE, there are hundreds of thousands of such cases. In a recent interview with the publishers the following statement was made: "It is perfectly astounding the thousands of letters we are receiving from the public requesting us to send Professor Laynard's work privately packed! Of course we have always made a custom of doing so; but why people should be ashamed of receiving such a book is beyond our comprehension and very uncomplimentary to the Professor, who is the greatest living authority upon personal hygiene. But for all this, the sale of his work in the English language is rapidly approaching one million copies. Hindustani and Malayalam are among the latest translations of Professor Laynard's famous book."

A REMARKABLE OFFER.

The publishers have issued a complete edition, at a price within the reach of all, so that the book may find a place in every home. The work is arranged in 127 chapters, the whole of which (in the popular edition now offered to the public) is bound in one volume. The book, although published at Two Shillings, will, if ordered direct from the Publishers, be forwarded to readers of SHORT STORIES, carriage paid, at the low discount price of

ONE SHILLING AND SIXPENCE.

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Among the numerous subjects dealt with, the following are but few. A complete syllabus, showing the contents of the whole of the **127 CHAPTERS**, enumerating upwards of **500 SUBJECTS** and divisions of subjects, can be had free on application to the Publishers:—

The way we make our own faces—Secrets of face transformation—Changeableness of beauty and its causes—Some strange facts concerning the variableness of beauty—"Odd-faced" beauty—The countenance the counterpart of the mind—How pleasing expressions become permanent—How a person's habitual look is acquired—How permanent expressions can be transformed—Metaphysical secrets of keeping young and preserving a youthful appearance—The author's investigations into the causes why some individuals look younger than others at a certain age—Discovery of a great metaphysical secret—Wonders of the skin—Effects of mental emotions upon the skin—Bad complexions and their causes—Diet that spoils and diet that improves the complexion—General care of the complexion—Construction, growth, and wonders of the hair—Why hair falls out—Premature greyness: its causes and prevention—General care of the hair—Superfluous hairs and how to treat them—Wrinkles: their prevention and treatment—Freckles, tan, and blackheads—Oily skin, dry skin, and loose skin—How the nose can be improved—Protruding ears and their treatment—Offensive breath—Anatomy of the teeth—Why teeth decay—General care of the teeth—Tallness, and how to attain it—Round shoulders and how to cure them—How to acquire a full chest—Perfect form and figure: their proper proportions—Thinness, and its treatment—Excessive stoutness—Care of the hands—Care of the feet—Physiognomy; or, the art of reading character from the face—Mental influences upon health—Power of the mind over the body—Influence of the mind in curing diseases—How the mind can cause dyspepsia—Effect of the direction of thought to the heart—How real diseases often supervene upon fancied ailments—How violent passions injure health—Laughter as a medicine—Ailments cured by laughter—Wonders of digestion—Relative value to our bodies of the principal articles of food—Fruits and vegetables as medicine: their various influences upon the physical system—Health-preserving diet and its consistency—Diet favourable to mental exertion and intellectual culture—Influence of various foods upon our passions and propensities—The influence exerted by the mind upon the appetite and digestion—Some perilous articles of food—Exercise and its relation to health—Baths and bathing: their influence upon health—The way we breathe, and how it affects our health—The marriage state, and its influence upon health—Statistics showing the comparative vitality of married and single persons—100 professions, trades, and occupations: their respective influences upon health and long life—Sleep, and its relation to health—Insomnia, and its treatment—The eyes, and how to preserve them—The ears and hearing: how to prevent deafness—The voice: its cultivation and preservation—Memory, and how to improve it—Sudden failure of memory—Rules for cultivating the memory—Influence of diet upon memory—Stammering, and how to cure it—Prevention of disease—Nervousness—Blushing: its physiology and treatment—Rules of life for attaining longevity—Compendium of the mental, moral, physical, and external influences that lessen the years of our earthly existence—How to live to a hundred—Premature old age and its causes—Short biographies of 30 modern centenarians, whose ages range from 115 to 185 years—General principles that can be laid down for the anticipation of longevity—The eight signs of long life.

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Please forward me Professor Boyd Laynard's complete work, SECRETS OF BEAUTY, HEALTH, AND LONG LIFE" (carriage paid), for which I enclose the sum of One Shilling and Sixpence.

Name.....

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Teacher Ate It.

Mr. B: "Bobby, did you eat that little mince-pie your mother made for you yesterday?" Bobby: "No, sir. I gave it to my teacher." Mr. B.: "Did she eat it?" Bobby: "I fancy so. There wasn't any school to-day."

Wanted to be Truthful.

Landlord Hooks: "Can you refer me to a work where I can learn how the ancients constructed those catapults that would throw stones half-a-mile?" Friend: "Don't believe I can. Why do you want such information?" Hooks: "Well, you see, I've advertised that this house is within a stone's throw of the railway station, and now I have got to rig up some plan for throwing that stone."

A Kind Wish.

An English traveller arrived in Dublin, from London, on a terribly wet and stormy night, and, calling a car, bade the driver hasten to his hotel. Arrived there he asked the driver his fare, and being struck by the fact that the sum stated was only the regulation amount, he gave the man a shilling for himself, thinking he deserved a tip on such a disagreeable evening. The jarvey looked at the money and then to the traveller's amused astonishment ejaculated: "Thank your honour; may the angels fetch your honour half-an-hour before the divil knows you're dead."

Not What He Expected.

"Ma wants two pounds of butter exactly like what you sent us last. If it ain't exactly like that she won't take it," said the small boy. The grocer turned to his numerous customers and remarked, blandly: "Some people in my business don't like particular customers, but I do. It's my delight to serve them and get them what they want. I will attend to you in a moment, little boy." "Be sure to get the same kind. A lot of pa's relations is visiting at our house, and ma doesn't want 'em to come again," the small boy explained.

He Had to Tell.

Johnny came home from school several times within a month with various bruises on his face and body, received in fights with his schoolmates, and on the last occasion his mother threatened him with severe punishment if he ever engaged in a fight again. Only a few days after the lad appeared with a black eye, and, scared by the stern maternal greeting, "Well, sir?" he departed from his usual truthful ways, and stammered: "I fell down and hit my head on a stone." "And which got the worst of it?" asked his big brother. "Oh, the other fellow," answered Johnny, briskly. "He's gone home with two black eyes."

Good for Trade.

"For outdoor exercise," said a bicyclist, "there is nothing to be compared with bicycle-riding. It develops and strengthens every muscle in the body. Physicians all over the country warmly recommend it." "Yes," was the reply, "I suppose they do, and surgeons also."

The Higher Things.

Little Boy: "Mamma, may I have that big family Bible a little while?" Fond Mamma: "Of course you can, my pet. Your thoughts are on higher things, I see." Little Boy: "Yes, mamma." Bridget (to herself, two hours afterwards): "Humph! More of that jam gone. I don't see how that boy reached it."

Bad Luck.

"What's the matter, Bromley?" "I've recovered my portmanteau." "I don't see why you should use such language about it." "Oh, you don't, eh! The thing isn't worth 10s., and it turns up just when the railway company was about to allow me £10 for it. It's just my luck."

Wasted Goodness.

"Mother, I can never win the medal for good behaviour," exclaimed a boy just from school. "I've tried and tried, but some other fellow always gets it." "But you must keep on trying," said his mother encouragingly. "It's no use," replied the boy. "I shan't try any more. It's a clean waste of goodness."

Noble Boy.

"Willie," said his mother, "your clothes are wet; you've been in the water." "Yes," said little Willie, bravely, "I went in and saved little Charlie Stebbins." "My noble boy!" said his fond mother, "did you jump in after him?" "No, mamma," said little Willie, proudly. "I jumped in first so as to be there when he fell in."

He Didn't Go After It.

Johnnie had been out in the yard playing with his ball, and suddenly came in and sat down to read. His father looked up, and, seeing that Johnnie had his Sunday-school book in his hand, thought it time to question him. "What did you do with the ball?" "It went over the wall into Mr. Brown's yard." "Did you go after it?" "No, pa." "Why not?" "Because it went through the window."

Insufficient Data.

As a pedestrian tourist was lately proceeding towards Abbotsford, he asked a man who was breaking stones by the roadside how long it would take him to reach that place. The man looked at him without speaking, and then resumed his work. The question was repeated, with the same result, and at last the traveller walked on. He had not proceeded more than a hundred yards when the man called after him, and made a sign for him to return. When the pedestrian reached the stone-breaker, the latter said to him: "It will take you an hour to reach Abbotsford." "Then why did you not tell me so at first?" asked the traveller. "Why," said the man, "it was necessary for me to see at what rate you walked; and, from the way you step out, I am now able to say that you will reach it in an hour."

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The Brain Gymnasium.

In these competitions a prize of £1 1s. will be awarded each week to the competitor whose attempt we receive giving the correct solution of all the puzzles. If more than one is absolutely correct the prize of £1 1s. will be given to the first correct attempt dealt with.

If no lists of absolutely correct solutions are sent in, the first prize will be awarded to the competitor whose attempt is first dealt with showing the fewest mistakes.

Each week we shall award, in addition to the above, either ten of our gold-plated pencil-cases or ten popular novels, to be distributed amongst the competitors whose attempts are absolutely correct and have failed to win the first prize, or, if no complete lists of correct solutions are received, to those whose attempts show the fewest mistakes.

Write all your solutions on one side only of the paper, putting the number against each. Post the batch in an envelope marked "Brain Gymnasium, Nos. 43—48," to reach the Editor, *Short Stories*, 18 Henrietta Street, London, W.C., by first post on Monday, February 24th, 1902.

The Editor's decision is final, and competitors must only enter on that understanding.

Readers are invited to submit puzzles, acrostics, conundrums, word-squares, etc., for publication on this page. A gold-plated pencil-case will be given to each reader whose attempts are used. All attempts must be vouched for as original, and, of course, it is distinctly understood that the sender of a puzzle must neither compete in the competition nor divulge to anyone the solution. Any reader found infringing this rule will be severely dealt with.

No. 43. ARITHMOREMS.

The following sets of words will form the names of towns in the United Kingdom. The figures must be turned into their Roman equivalents.

50 + A rank
51 + The
500 + Nae beer
56 + Oye
510 + Roof
1550 + Oh A
1055 + Part no whole
50 + Gog was
550 + On. No
101 + Hawk
55 + Een

No. 44. CHARADE.

My FIRST was used long years ago
In battle fierce against the foe,
My SECOND swims in the ocean free,
A fish as you will quickly see.
My WHOLE is part of a famous game
Which every boy is proud to name.

No. 45. ADDED WORDS.

Merriment, a period of time and a Roman numeral made sad sight

No. 46. REBUS.

At first, when seen, I odd appear
In every person's eye;
But make me less, I'll prove quite clear
I'm even as a die.
Diminish me a little more,
You'll find you'll then expose
What brings the days of rich and poor
Completely to a close.

No. 47. WORD FORMING.

Using all the letters in the following sentence, make the names of six breeds of dogs:

"Can little dogs in ire bark at the poets?"

No. 48. SQUARE WORD.

With the following letters make a square word:

EEE III O LLLL P SSSS

Result of "Brain Gymnasium," Nos. 25 to 30.

The First Prize of £1 1s. has been awarded to Mr. J. Morris, of 27 Richmond Road, Oxford.

A pencil-case has been sent to each of the following:

W. Martin, 8 Drum Terrace, Leith.
R. B. Earée, Miserden Rectory, Cirencester.
J. Davis, Beech Avenue Hospital, Nottingham.
Miss O. Gardner, 1 Langdon Place, Swansea.
Mrs. F. A. Gardner, 1 Langdon Place, Swansea.
R. E. Priestley, The Grammar School, Tewkesbury.
P. Brooks, 28 Kilnside Road, Paisley.
J. D. Champion, Quethiock, Liskeard.
A. Spearing, Patricroft, Manchester.
W. J. Spearing, 142 Liverpool Road, Patricroft, Manchester.

SOLUTIONS.

25. BALM.
ALOE.
LONE.
MEETING.
IRON.
NORA.
GNAT.

26. BRISTOL.

27. 8 + 2 10
12 − 2 10
5 × 2 10
20 ÷ 2 10
—
45

28. WAISTCOAT.

29. RESUSCITATE.

30. In Britain, as in America, some of the more wealthy of the upper ten, following Royal precedent, have their own luxuriously fitted-up railway saloon carriages, which have been built at enormous expense by the different railways.

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The ordinary glove is likely to strain the muscles of the wrist.

It is filled with the best curled hair, and covered with wine coloured nappa kid.

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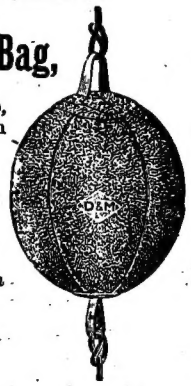

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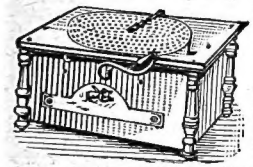

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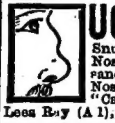

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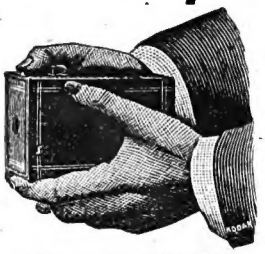

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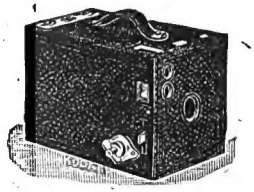

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